



The  
William Edward Reis  
Library



Allegheny College

**WITHDRAWN**



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2024





# OUR OLD ACTORS.<sup>227</sup>

B 17

BY  
HENRY BARTON BAKER,

AUTHOR OF  
'STRAFFORD.'

*POPULAR EDITION.*



LONDON :  
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,  
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1881.

[All Rights Reserved.]



Dedicated

BY PERMISSION TO

HENRY IRVING, Esq.,

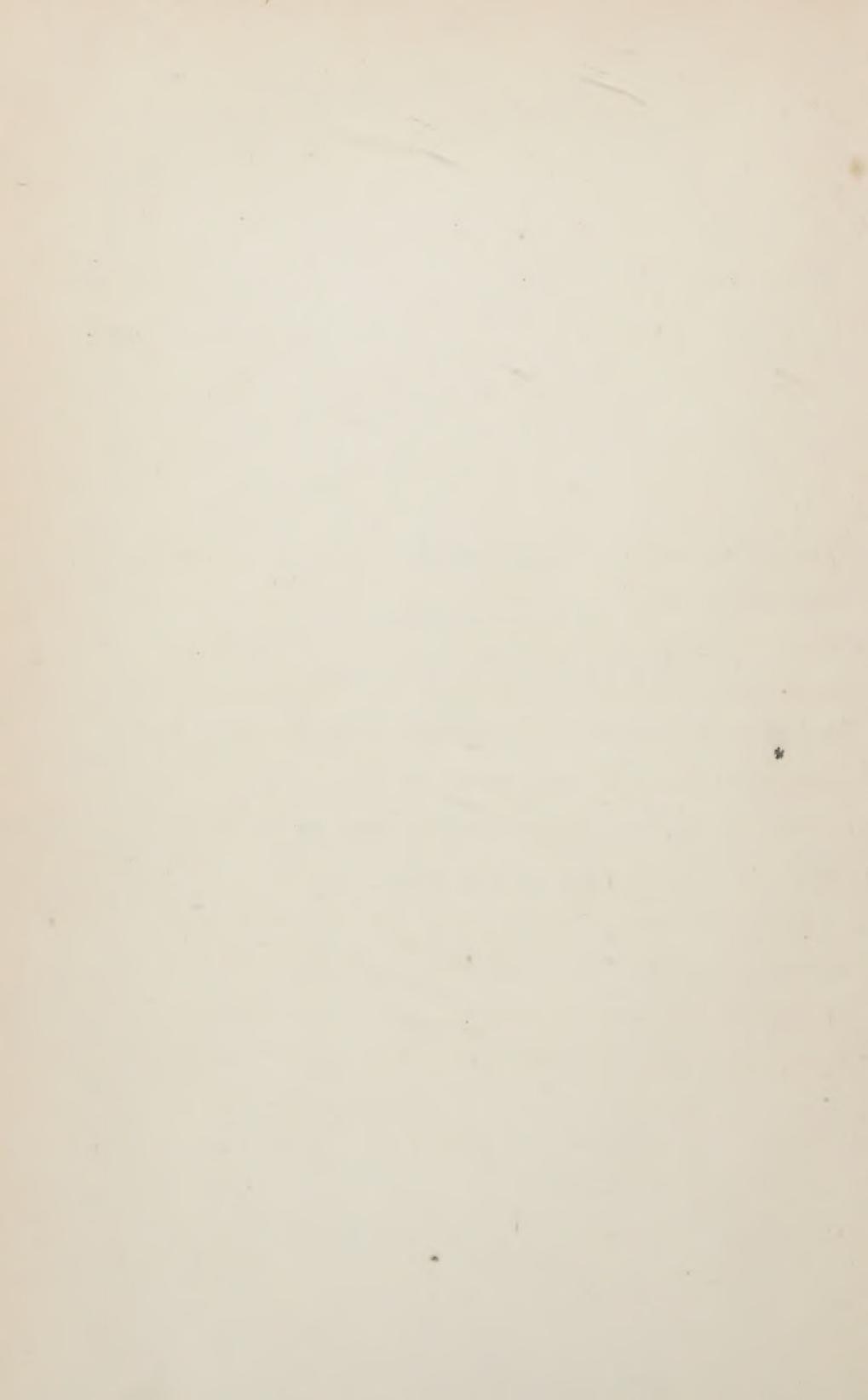
AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE OF ADMIRATION FOR ONE WHO HAS

\*  
DONE SO MUCH

TO PERPETUATE THE GLORIES OF

OUR OLD ACTORS.

24191



## PREFACE.

---

THE present volume is not a mere reprint of the work which appeared in 1878. Three months' labour has been expended upon its revision and correction ; sometimes the materials have been re-arranged ; irrelevant matter and apocryphal anecdotes have been excised, while many interesting facts and good stories have been added.

The difficulty of compressing two large volumes into one small one necessitated condensation.

In conclusion, the author trusts that his labour will be rewarded, and that the present edition of 'Our Old Actors' will become a standard book of reference for all who are interested in the history of the British stage.



# CONTENTS.



## PROLOGUE.

	PAGE
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE COMMONWEALTH.	1

## PART I.

### FROM THE RESTORATION TO GARRICK.

#### CHAPTER

I. THE ACTORS OF THE RESTORATION	-	-	-	13
II. BETTERTON AND HIS ASSOCIATES	-	-	-	25
III. COLLEY CIBBER AND HIS ASSOCIATES	-	-	-	45
IV. THE INTERREGNUM	-	-	-	78

## PART II.

### THE GARRICK PERIOD.

I. DAVID GARRICK	-	-	-	89
II. CHARLES MACKLIN	-	-	-	123
III. SAMUEL FOOTE AND TATE WILKINSON	-	-	-	148
IV. SOME FAMOUS TRAGEDIANS AND COMEDIANS	-	-	-	173
V. THE LADIES	-	-	-	200

## PART III.

### THE KEMBLE PERIOD.

I. THE KEMBLE FAMILY—MRS. SIDDONS	-	-	-	235
II. JOHN PHILIP, STEPHEN, CHARLES AND FANNY KEMBLE	-	-	-	254
III. GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE	-	-	-	270

---

CHAPTER	PAGE
IV. SOME OTHER FAMOUS ACTORS OF THIS PERIOD -	287
V. TWO ROYAL FAVOURITES: 'PERDITA' ROBINSON AND MRS. JORDAN - - - - -	301

---

## PART IV.

## THE KEAN AND MACREADY PERIOD.

I. EDMUND KEAN - - - - -	339
II. CHARLES MAYNE YOUNG - - - - -	378
III. ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON - - - - -	387
IV. THE ELDER MATHEWS - - - - -	403
V. SOME MORE FAMOUS COMEDIANS - - - - -	421
VI. THE LAST OF THE FAMOUS ACTRESSES - - - - -	429
VII. WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY - - - - -	437

# OUR OLD ACTORS.



## PROLOGUE.

*FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES TO THE COMMON-WEALTH.*

Our earliest actors—The City and the players—The seven theatres—Dick Tarleton—The original actors of Shakespeare's plays—Richard Burbadge—Will Kempe—Edward Alleyn and Dulwich College—Closing of the theatres by the Puritans—Persecution of the players.

In England, as in France, plays founded upon Scriptural stories or on the lives of the saints were the earliest forms of dramatic representation. These were generally performed in the churches by monks and parish clerks. About the time of Henry VI. a new sort of entertainment came into vogue called 'The Morality,' an allegory of the passions, the principal personage of which, 'The Vice,' a witty attendant of the Devil, was afterwards developed into that indispensable character of the Elizabethan drama, the clown. In consequence of the profanity and indecency of these exhibitions, Bishop Bonner in 1542 issued a mandate in which he forbade any ecclesiastic henceforth appearing upon the public stage.

As early as the fifteenth century 'Mysteries' and 'Morallities' were acted by members of the guilds, of whose performances Shakespeare has bequeathed us a diverting picture in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'; and these con-

tinued to be the chief exponents of the dramatic art until the rise of the regular drama. These representations were usually given in an inn-yard, and the galleries which surrounded the ancient hosteries, in which the spectators were ranged, suggested the form of our modern theatres. Even in Shakespeare's time the pit was called indifferently the 'pit' or 'yard.'

In the Mystery and Miracle Plays there were attempts at scenery and stage properties. In a drawing of the time of Henry VI. we are shown a scene in a 'Morality' in which there are five stages, and a castle in the centre. In one entitled 'Mary Magdalen,' mention is made of the introduction of a castle and a ship. In another, 'Cain,' the action necessitated a change of scene from the exterior to the interior of a cottage, in which a peasant's wife was discovered in bed, with an infant in a cradle beside her. In a play on the conversion of St. Paul there is a direction for the use of thunder.

In 1526 theatrical amusements had become so fashionable that it was usual, on the celebration of any notable event in families of distinction, and on all festivals and holidays, either to have a play represented by the performers attached to the house or to hire such substitutes as Bottom and his companions.

An Elizabethan writer states that before 1570 'he neither knew nor read of any such theatres, set stages or playhouses as have been purposely built within man's memory.' Unless the performances were given in private houses or the Universities, inn-yards still sufficed, as they had done previously. In 1572, so greatly had the number of players increased, that it was enacted that all who could not show licenses signed by two justices of the peace should be dealt with as rogues and vagabonds. In 1586 Walsingham mentions two hundred players as being in or near London; this statement is perhaps an exaggeration, and would include the unlicensed troupes who played in inn-yards. In 1574

the first royal license, still extant, was granted to James Burbadge (the father of Richard) and other players of Lord Leicester's, giving them the right to play within the city of London and its liberties, or any cities or boroughs throughout England. This privilege was strongly opposed by the mayor and aldermen of London, who were already tinctured with puritanism, and it would seem to a certain extent effectually, for it is doubtful whether the actor ever obtained a footing within the jurisdiction of those potentates.

It has been surmised that the opposition of the city to plays being performed in the inn-yards within its boundaries, first brought about the construction of regular theatres. The citizens were continually presenting petitions and complaints to the sovereign, in which they set forth that the great concourse of people the players brought prevented customers from getting to their shops, and impeded marriages and burials. In 1600 an order was issued in council to limit the theatres to two, the Fortune and the Globe ; but there seems to have been no attempt to carry out this order, for in 1616 we find the mayor calling attention to it, and directing the suppression of the Blackfriars. ‘There is so great a multitude of coaches,’ says the document, ‘whereof many are hackney coaches, bringing people of all sorts, that sometimes all the streets cannot contain them.’

Even a century later the city magnates were equally virulent against the theatres. In the year 1700 the Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen issued an order forbidding any playhouse bill to be affixed within the liberties of the city, denouncing the theatres as a public nuisance, and praying the Court to suppress them.

The first regular playhouse of which we find any mention was called ‘The Theatre,’ and was situated in Shoreditch. This house, which could have been only a very rude wooden erection, seems to have been abandoned as early as 1578. The ‘Curtain,’ in Moor Fields, so called from its sign being a striped curtain, was opened in 1576, and

continued to be in use until the commencement of Charles I.'s reign. In Shakespeare's time there were seven regular theatres : the Curtain ; the Blackfriars (built in 1578 by James Burbadge) ; the Whitefriars (1580) ; the Red Bull, St. John's Street ; the Cockpit or Phœnix, Drury Lane, situated in Cock Pit Alley, now known as Pitt Court,\* not opened until late in James's reign ; the Fortune, Golden Lane, built or rebuilt by Alleyn (1599). There were besides—the Globe, opened about 1594 ; the Swan, the Rose, and the Hope on Bankside (Southwark) ; the Paris Garden, a summer theatre on Newington Butts ; and the inn-yards, in which dramatic performances continued to be given.

Perhaps the most important character in the earlier drama was the clown, who was introduced into every play, and had unlimited license accorded him ; he came on between the acts and scenes, and obtruded himself even upon the action of the play, without any respect to propriety, whenever any new piece of buffoonery struck him.

Hence Hamlet's advice to the players : 'Let those who play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them : for there be of them, that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too ; though, in the meantime, *some necessary question of the play be then to be considered* : that's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.'

A famous clown was DICK TARLETON. 'For a wondrous pleasant extemporal wit, he was the wonder of his tyme ! He was so beloved that men use his picture for their signs,' says Howes. Another old author tells us : 'For the clown's part he never had his equal.' Even Ben Jonson, who never missed an opportunity of having a fling at actors, could not refrain from applauding Tarleton. 'The selfsame words spoken by another would hardly move a man to smile, which uttered by him would force a sad soul to laughter.' It

\* Recently swept away under the Artisans' Dwelling Act.

is said he was brought to London from Shropshire by one of Lord Leicester's servants, who found him in the fields tending his father's swine, and was so astonished by the readiness of his answers and the quickness of his intellect, that he proposed he should enter my lord's service—a proposal Dick was willing enough to embrace. In a little while he was enrolled among the twelve players who formed the Queen's company, and became a kind of court-jester as well. 'When the Queen was serious,' says Fuller, 'I dare not say sullen, Tarleton could undumpish her at his pleasure. He told her more of her faults than most of her chaplains, and cured her of her melancholy better than all her physicians.' He appears to have chiefly played at the Red Bull; in his latter years he kept a tavern in Paternoster Row, and afterwards the Tabor, in Gracechurch Street. He died in 1588, and was buried in St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, and his picture forms the frontispiece of a jest-book which bears his name. There are many strange stories recorded of his wit and his rogueries; here is one that much savours of Rabelais. Having run up a long score at an inn at Sandwich, and not being able, or not feeling disposed to pay, he made his boy accuse him of being a seminary priest. When the officers came they found him upon his knees, crossing himself most devoutly; they paid his reckoning, made him prisoner and carried him off to London. He was taken before Recorder Fleetwood, who knew him well, and laughing heartily at the trick, not only discharged him but invited him home to dinner.

Of the first and mightiest name in the list, little need be said, since it would be useless to enter into a discussion upon Shakespeare's merits as an actor. That he thoroughly understood the art is proved by Hamlet's address to the players, but that is no proof of his own abilities, since there are many men who are admirable judges of acting and excellent stage-managers, yet very inferior performers. We know that he played the Ghost in his own 'Hamlet,' that

he was the original Know'ell in 'Every Man in his Humour,' and that he was in the first caste of 'Sejanus'—and that is all.

Burbadge was the first of our great tragic actors, and must have been, according to contemporary testimony, a consummate master of his art. All that is known of his biography may be contained in a few words. He was born, lived, and died, in Holywell (now the High Street), or Halliwell Street, as it was then called, Shoreditch. There are many testimonies still extant of the high esteem in which he was held. In the 'Return from Parnassus,' one of the characters says: 'For honour, who of more repute than Dick Burbadge and Will Kempt—he is not accounted a gentleman who does not know Dick Burbadge and Will Kempt.' He died in 1618, some say of the plague, but the following line which occurs in an elegy,

'He [Death] first made seizure of thy wondrous tongue,'

would seem to indicate that paralysis was the cause of death. In the register of St. Leonard's, Shoreditch, we read: '1618. Richard Burbadge, player, was buried the xvijth of March, Halliwell Street.' He was the original of the greater number of Shakespeare's heroes—of Coriolanus, Brutus, Romeo, Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Shylock, Macbeth, Henry V., Prince Hal, and Richard the Third.

Here are extracts from a famous elegy which enumerates some of his greatest characters and gives us an excellent idea of his acting :

'He's gone, and with him what a world are dead,  
Friends every one, and what a blank instead !  
Take him for all in all, he was a man  
Not to be match'd, and no age ever can.  
No more young Hamlet, though but scant of breath,  
Shall cry "Revenge," for his dear father's death ;  
Poor Romeo never more shall tears beget  
For Juliet's love and cruel Capulet.'

Heart-broke Philaster, and Aminatas too,  
Are lost for ever ; with the red-hair'd Jew.\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Thy stature small, but every thought and mood  
Might throughly from thy face be understood.  
And his whole action he could change with ease,  
From ancient Leare to youthful Pericles.  
But let me not forget one chiefest part,  
Wherein beyond the rest he moved the heart,  
The grieved Moor—

\* \* \* \* \*

All these and many more with him are dead.

\* \* \* \* \*

England's great Roscius ! for what Roscius  
Was to Rome that Burbadge was to us !  
How did his speech become him, and his pace  
Suit with his speech, and every action grace,  
Them both alike, while not a word did fall  
Without just weight to ballast it withal.  
Had'st thou but spoke with Death, and us'd the power  
Of thy enchanting tongue at that first hour  
Of his assault, he had let fall his dart  
And quite been charm'd with thy all-charming art.'

Tarleton's immediate successor and almost his equal in wit was WILL KEMPE; but he was a legitimate actor as well as a clown, being, it is supposed, the original Dogberry, Peter, Launce, Shallow, Launcelot Gobbo, Touchstone, and the First Gravedigger. In an old pamphlet he is spoken of as ‘the most comical and conceited cavaleire M. de Kempe, jest-monger and vice-gerent general to the ghost of Dick Tarleton.’ Heywood, in his ‘Apology for Actors,’ says, ‘To whom [Tarleton] succeeded Will Kempe, as well in the favour of Her Majesty as in the opinion and good thoughts of the general audience.’ Nash speaks of him, in 1589, as a complete and finished actor, whose fame had extended even beyond the shores of England. But it is thought that Hamlet’s diatribe against ‘gagging’ was especially meant for Kempe. Like Tarleton, he did not confine his wit and vagaries to the stage, but frequently practised

\* All representatives of Shylock’s wore a red wig until Keane donned a black; the former colour it would seem, however, has the authority of the original.

them out of doors. There is in an old pamphlet, dated 1600, written by him, entitled ‘Nine Daisies Wonder. Performed in a Morris Dance from London to Norwich, containing the pleasures, paines and kinde entertainments of William Kempe between London and that City,’ etc. On the title-page there is a woodcut representing Kempe, dancing with bells on his legs, wearing a brocaded jacket and scarf, attended by Thomas Sly, another noted actor, as tabourer. It need scarcely be remarked that this strange expedition was undertaken for a wager. He, for the same consideration, walked backwards from London to Berwick.

He is made to say in an old comedy, ‘I am somewhat hard of study, an like your honour, but if you will invent any extemporal merriment I’ll put out the small sacke of wit I ha’ left in venture with them.’ He was held in high estimation by his contemporaries, and his name was frequently coupled with that of Burbadge. The time of his death is uncertain.

JOHN HEMINGS was another Warwickshire man—many of the old players came from that part of the country—Hemings was born at Shottery, not far from Stratford, about 1556. Before Elizabeth’s death he was one of the principal proprietors of the Globe, and his name is joined with that of Shakespeare and Burbadge in King James’s license of 1603. He is accredited with the honour of being the original Falstaff, and had the greater honour of being, with Condell, the editor and publisher of the first folio of Shakespeare’s plays (1623).

According to the following passage, it would appear that he received at least a portion of the manuscript from the author direct: ‘His mind and hand went together, and what he thought he uttered with that easiness that *we have scarcely received from him a blot in his papers.*’ (The italics are my own.) Payne Collier thinks that many actors of the time were engaged in business as well as professionally, and remarks that as Hemings was free of the Grocers’

Company he might have been a grocer. He died in 1630, and was buried in St. Mary's, Aldermanbury, in which parish he had resided all his life.

CONDELL, his collaborateur in the folio, was also a resident of Aldermanbury, and the owner of property in that parish ; he was a man of substance who had shares in the Blackfriars Theatre, and kept his country house at Fulham. No particular Shakespearian part has been assigned to him, but he was the original Bobadil, and created several of Beaumont and Fletcher's and Webster's great characters. He died in 1627.

NATHAN FIELD was said to have been second only to Burbadge as an actor. He was one of the children of 'Her Majesty's Revels,' and is in the original cast of Jonson's 'Cynthia's Revels.' Born in 1587, he was too young to have been an original, at least as an adult, in any of Shakespeare's plays, but he succeeded to several of Burbadge's great characters, and was especially famous in the Moor.

'Field is in sooth an actor—all men know it,  
And is the true Othello of the poet.'

JOSEPH TAYLOR has been accredited by Davies with being the original Hamlet ; but even if there was no direct evidence against this assertion, it would be absurd to suppose that Burbadge, in the height of his powers, would have allowed another actor to take possession of such a character. Taylor was his successor in the part, and might, during the latter years of 'Roscius,' have played it when the other was indisposed. He is said to have been the original Iago, but after Burbadge's death he took Othello.

Another celebrated player of this period, EDWARD ALLEVYN, has been coupled with Burbadge by Sir Richard Baker as one of two actors 'such as no age must ever look to see the like.' Among other parts he was the original of Marlowe's 'Jew of Malta,' and 'Tamerlane.' In conjunction with Philip Henslowe, he built the Fortune, and having accumulated considerable wealth, founded, as is well-known,

Dulwich College for six poor men and women, and twelve children. At first it was intended that the recipients of this bounty should be drawn exclusively from the theatrical profession ; but it is said that the refusal of the pensioners to admit among them an old door-keeper of the theatre, so disgusted the founder that he at once changed the nature of the bequest. Since 1857 this charity has been entirely re-constituted. The revenue left by Alleyn was £600 a year ; it is now £17,000.

Probably at no other period of the history of the English stage was the dramatic art so thoroughly studied and so well understood. Boys were regularly apprenticed to the profession. Each principal was entitled to have an apprentice, who played the young and the female characters, and for whose services he received a certain sum. We find in Henslowe's accounts an item for buying the services of one for eight pounds. Thus trained under great masters it is not to be wondered at that they grew to be consummate masters of their art.

The actors lived in their fine old substantial city houses, or in grand country manors, such as Edward Alleyn inhabited at Dulwich, signed themselves 'gentlemen,' were esteemed and sought after by the best people, and if commonly prudent, died rich and honoured. Their worst enemy was the plague ; while it raged, and that was pretty frequently, all theatres were closed, and they had to migrate into the country.

But as Puritanism advanced the prosperity of the theatrical profession began to decline. In 1622 there were but four principal companies—the King's, which acted at the Blackfriars and the Globe, the Prince's at the Curtain, the Palgrave's at the Fortune, the Queen of Bohemia's at the Cockpit. In 1629 female performers were first seen upon the English stage. The innovation was introduced by a French company, but the women were hissed and pelted off the stage of the new house just opened in Salisbury Court.

Three weeks afterwards they made a second attempt, but the audience would not tolerate them. King Charles and his Queen had a great love for dramatic entertainments, the latter frequently took part in the Court Masques.

On the 6th of September, 1642, the theatres were closed by ordinance, it being considered not seemly to indulge in any kind of diversions or amusements in such troublous times. In 1647, another and more imperative order was issued, in consequence of certain infractions of the previous one, threatening to imprison and punish as rogues all who broke its enactments. Close upon the heels of this second came a third, which declared all players to be rogues and vagabonds, and authorised the justices of the peace to demolish all stage galleries and seats ; it likewise commanded that any actor discovered in the exercise of his vocation was to be whipped for the first offence, and for the second to be treated as an incorrigible rogue, while every person found witnessing the performance of a stage-play should be fined five shillings. But not even these stringent regulations were found sufficient, and in the next year a Provost Marshal was appointed, whose duty it was to seize all ballad-singers and suppress all stage-plays.

In the ‘*Historia Histrionica*’ we have a striking picture of the condition of the actors at this period. ‘Most of them,’ writes the author, ‘except Lowin, Taylor, and Pollard (who were superannuated) went into the King’s army, and, like good men and true, served their old master, though in a different yet more honourable capacity. Robinson was killed at the taking of a place (I think Basing House) by Harrison, he that was after hanged at Charing Cross, who refused him quarter, and shot him in the head when he had laid down his arms, abusing Scripture at the same time in saying, “Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently.” . . . I have not heard of one of these players of any note that sided with the other party, but only Swanston ; and he professed himself a Presbyterian, took up the trade of a

jeweller, and lived in Aldermanbury. The rest either lost or exposed their lives for their King. When the wars were over, and the Royalists totally subdued, most of 'em who were left alive gathered to London, and for a subsistence endeavoured to revive their old trade privately. They made up a company out of the scattered members of several, and in the winter of 1648 they ventured to act some plays, with as much privacy and caution as could be, at the Cockpit. They continued undisturbed for three or four days ; but at last, as they were presenting the tragedy of the "Bloody Brother," a party of foot soldiers beset the house, surprised 'em about the middle of the play, and carried 'em away in their habits, not admitting them to shift, to Hatton House, then a prison, where, having detained them some time, they plundered them of their clothes, and let 'em loose again. Afterwards, in Oliver's time, they used to act privately, three or four miles or more out of town, now here, now there ; sometimes in noblemen's houses, in particular Holland House at Kensington, where the nobility and gentry who met (but in no great numbers) used to make a sum for them, each giving a broad piece, or the like. And Alexander Goffe, the woman actor at Blackfriars (who had made himself known to persons of quality), used to be the jackal, and give notice of time and place.'

But not even the saints were immaculate, for Robert Cox found means to bribe the officers appointed to look after such affairs, and under the guise of rope-dancing, gave short interludes and 'drolls.'

## PART I.

*FROM THE RESTORATION TO GARRICK.*

---

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE ACTORS OF THE RESTORATION.

The beginning of the revival—Killigrew and Davenant's patent—Articles of agreement—First Drury Lane playbill—Killigrew's company—Hart—Anecdotes of Joe Haines—The first English actress—Nell Gwynne—Anecdotes of her.

THE partisans of the Commonwealth soon began to grow weary of the melancholy gloom in which they lived; Davenant, having obtained the countenance of Sir John Maynard, Whitelocke, and other persons of distinction, opened in 1656 a theatre at Rutland House, Charterhouse Yard, where he began with the representation of an opera, ‘*The Siege of Rhodes*;’ and towards the end of 1659 theatres began to revive, and plays were openly performed at the Red Bull. The actors lost no time after ‘the King had got his own again,’ and Rhodes, formerly prompter at the Blackfriars, who had turned bookseller during the suppression, waited upon Monk, while he was encamped in Hyde Park, and obtained permission from him to open the Cockpit. Before the end of June Beeston was at work in Salisbury Court, and the Red Bull Company had fitted up a tennis court in Vere Street, Clare Market, for dramatic representations. All the old theatres, however, were about to pass away.

Neither Blackfriars nor the Globe was used after 1647. The Fortune, which had been once burned down and rebuilt, was abandoned in 1661; the Cockpit and the Red Bull survived two years longer; the house in Dorset Gardens had been destroyed in 1649.

In August, 1660, the King granted to Thomas Killigrew, a groom of the Chamber, and to Sir William Davenant leave to erect two new theatres—one in Drury Lane, the other in Salisbury Court—and the sole privilege of representing stage-plays in London and Westminster. The Company of the first was to be called the King's, that of the second the Duke of York's. The articles of agreement between Davenant and his actors give us a complete picture of the theatrical management of the period.

'It is agreed that the general receipts of money of the said playhouse shall—after the house-rent and hirelings [supers and inferior actors] and all other and necessary expenses of that kind be defrayed—be divided into fourteen proportions or shares, whereof the same William Davenant shall have four full proportions or shares to his own use, and the rest to the use of the company. It is further stipulated that the said company shall admit such a consort of musicians into the said playhouse for their necessary use, as the said Sir William shall nominate and provide, during their playing in the said playhouse, not exceeding the rate of thirty shillings a day, to be defrayed out of the general expenses of the house before the said fourteen shares be divided.' It was further agreed that upon the opening of the new theatre in Salisbury Court, the proceeds should be divided into fifteen shares—two to be paid Sir William towards house-rent, building, scaffolding, and the making of frames for scenes, and a third was to be deducted for habits, properties, and scenery. Out of the remaining twelve he was also to receive seven, 'to maintain all women that are to represent women's parts, and in consideration of erecting and establishing these to be a company, and his, the said

Sir William's, pains and expenses to that purpose for many years.'

The two patents granted by Charles brought about a revolution in stage affairs, by taking their direction out of the hands of the Master of the Revels, who had hitherto been omnipotent over them, and had derived considerable emoluments from their direction. Sir Henry Herbert, who still held the office, made a struggle to preserve his privileges, and forbade both companies to play without his authority, or without paying the customary fees. It need scarcely be said that this defiance of the royal patent came to nothing.

For his new theatre in Drury Lane, Killigrew bought a piece of ground called the Riding Yard, for which he was to pay £50 a year; the present building stands upon the same site; the erection cost £1,500: it was one hundred and twelve feet from east to west, and fifty-nine from north to south. Its existence was a brief one, for it was burnt down nine years after it was opened, in January, 1671. The conflagration was so furious that between fifty and sixty of the adjoining houses were consumed, or had to be blown up. The new theatre, built from a design of Wren's, was not opened until March, 1674. The company continued to perform during this interregnum, but at what theatre is not known. The new house was singularly plain and undecorated. All the prices were raised, in consequence of the great expense of the building, it was alleged—the boxes to 4s., the pit to 2s. 6d., the first gallery to 1s. 6d., the lower to 1s. Before the opening of Covent Garden Killigrew's theatre had no positive name, being called indifferently, 'The New Theatre in Covent Garden,' 'The King's Theatre in Covent Garden,' 'The Theatre Royal, Brydges Street,' 'The Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, Covent Garden.'

It was under Killigrew that the veterans of the stage enrolled themselves. Here were to be found all who

survived Charles I.'s time, many of whom had fought for their royal master. The men of this company were entered as members of the royal household, provided with a livery of scarlet and silver, and were styled 'Gentlemen of the Great Chamber.' Cibber does not know whether the same distinction was bestowed upon the Duke's company; but both were great favourites with the public, and considered of so much importance by the Court, that their government, and even their private differences and complaints, were personally decided by the King and his brother.

We will briefly describe the principal members of the King's company. BURT, an excellent tragic actor, had been a cornet of cavalry under Prince Rupert's command, during the Rebellion. MOHUN had been a Major in the royal army; he was a very fine performer, second only to Hart, with whom he sustained the opposite parts in tragedy, and was esteemed by the King even above him. 'Thou little man of mettle,' cried Lee, the dramatist, after seeing him play Mithridates, 'if I should write a hundred plays, I would write a part for thy mouth.'

CLUN was a famous Iago; he was murdered one night, in 1664, in Kentish Town Road, then a lonely country track, while on his way to his country-house at Highgate. All three of these had, as boys, been apprentices at the Blackfriars and Cockpit, where they had performed women's parts. LACY's portrait in three of his principal characters, painted by order of Charles II., is still to be seen at Hampton Court.

Pepys describes his Teague in 'The Committee' as 'beyond imagination.' He was also a great Falstaff; was the original Bayes of Buckingham's 'Rehearsal,' in which he made a wonderful hit by mimicking Dryden. Having ventured, in Sir Robert Howard's 'Silent Woman,' to be sarcastic upon the Court, he was locked up for the offence; and a quarrel between him and Sir Robert

upon the subject, caused the theatre to be closed for a short time. Lacy, however, was by-and-by restored to royal favour, and continued to enjoy it until his death in 1681. CARTWRIGHT was a celebrated Falstaff. ‘Scum’ GOODMAN is mentioned by Cibber as an excellent actor. But in private life he was one of the most infamous characters that ever disgraced the stage. Once he went upon the road, and was condemned to death for highway robbery, but was pardoned by King James. He had been a favoured lover of the Duchess of Cleveland until he attempted to poison two of her children. He was concerned in the Fenwick plot, in 1696, betrayed his associates, and turned king’s evidence against them. Of his end nothing is known.

HARRIS is an actor frequently referred to by Pepys ; at first, he belonged to Davenant’s company, but ‘grew so proud,’ says the diarist, and demanded for himself more than anybody else, in consequence of ‘the King and everybody else crying him up so high, and that above Betterton, he being a more ayery man, as he is indeed.’ When Pepys entertained him at his house, he found him ‘a very curious and understanding person in all things, and a man of fine conversation.’ He was an intimate friend of the diarist ; we read of his dining with him and being conveyed to the theatre in his coach.

HART, who was Shakespeare’s grand-nephew, his father being the eldest son of the poet’s sister, was the most famous actor of this period. Before the Rebellion he played women’s parts, at the Blackfriars ; upon the closing of the theatres he took up arms for the King, and was given a commission ; he was a lieutenant of horse in Prince Rupert’s regiment. He was the original of Lee’s Alexander the Great, and it was said by a nobleman, that his action in that character was so excellent that no prince in Europe might have been ashamed to learn deportment from him. Rochester called him the Roscius, Mohun the *Æsopus* of the stage. ‘Were I a poet, nay, a Fletcher, a Shakespeare,’ says a writer of the time, enthusiastically, ‘I

would quit my own title to immortality, so that one actor might never die. This I may modestly say of him, nor is it my own particular opinion, but the sense of all mankind, that the best tragedies on the English stage have received their lustre from Mr. Hart's performance.' 'In the most wretched of characters,' says Rymer, 'he gives a lustre and brilliance which dazzle the sight, that the shortcomings in the poetry cannot be perceived.' He was as fine in comedy as in tragedy.

'My old friends, Hart and Mohun,' says Steele, *Tatler*, 99, 'the one by his natural and proper force, the other by his great skill and acts, never failed to send me home full of such ideas as affected my behaviour, and made me insensibly more courteous and humane to my friends and acquaintances.' 'Mrs. Knipp tells me,' writes Pepys, 'that my Lady Castlemaine is mightily in love with Hart of their house; and he is much with her in private, and she goes to him, and do give him many presents.'

Hart's salary never exceeded £3 a week; but when he became a sharer in the patent he realised a thousand a year, a very fine income in those days. Upon his retirement in 1682 he was allowed forty shillings a week, but he died in 1683.

JOE HAINES was an excellent comic actor, as well as a wit and a practical jester, whose society was sought by the best people of the time. He was a scholar, had been educated at Oxford, and had been Latin Secretary to Sir Joseph Williamson before he took to the stage. There are enough good stories told of his impudent and mischievous disposition to fill a small volume. Once he served Hart a cruel trick. The great tragedian, rather arbitrarily, insisted upon his going on one night as a senator in 'Catiline,' although his position in the theatre, and his salary being fifty shillings a week, exempted him from such service. Joe resolved to be revenged; he put on a Scaramouch's dress, a large ruff, huge whiskers and a Merry Andrew's cap, and thus attired,

with a short pipe in his mouth and a three-legged stool in his hand, followed Catiline on to the stage. Hart was always so absorbed in the part he was acting, that he had no eyes or ears for anything else, and never suffered his attention to be for a moment diverted. When Joe entered and sat himself upon his stool, he began laughing and grinning behind the tragedian's back till the house was in a roar ; but although he wondered what was amiss, Hart went on acting, without once turning his head, until some movement revealed to him the ludicrous scene. Haines was immediately turned out of the theatre. Soon afterwards he met with a naval chaplain who was seeking a living, and succeeded in persuading the credulous parson that he could procure him the appointment of chaplain of the theatre, with a handsome salary. All he would have to do would be to summon the company to prayers every morning by ringing a bell, and repeating the formula, 'Players, players, come to prayers ?' 'But,' he added, 'there's a terrible man there named Hart, who will rush out and abuse you ; but take no notice of him, he's either mad or an atheist.' The next morning he introduced the clergyman behind the scenes, placed a bell in his hand, and disappeared to watch the joke. The victim began ringing his bell and shouting in a very sonorous voice, 'Players, players, come to prayers ?' and all the company gathered round, highly amused, thinking he was insane, until Hart succeeded in obtaining an explanation. Upon which he very quickly opened his eyes to the trick that had been put upon him, and kindly invited the chaplain to dine with him. The jest might have had serious consequences, had not Joe's ready wit been equal to the occasion ; for the victim had a choleric son, who insisted upon his fighting upon the spot. 'Give me only a few minutes to pray,' said Haines, 'and I am at your service.' Upon which he fell upon his knees and supplicated in a loud voice for pardon for having previously killed seventeen men in duels, and for the eighteenth he was about to add

to their number ; which so cooled the challenger's courage, that he took to his heels. Once, when arrested in the street for debt, he saw the Bishop of Ely's carriage coming along. Struck by an audacious idea, he said to the bailiffs, 'That is my cousin, and if you will let me speak to him he will settle your demands.' The bailiffs assented. Joe stopped the carriage, and, hat in hand, thrust his head through the window. 'My lord,' he said, in a tone of great emotion, 'here are two poor Catholic fellows who are so troubled by doubts and scruples of conscience that I'm afraid they'll hang themselves.' 'Come to me to-morrow morning and I'll satisfy you,' said the bishop, addressing the bailiffs. Joe went free, and the next morning the two men waited upon his lordship. 'Now, what are these scruples of conscience you have?' inquired the bishop. 'Please your lordship,' answered one of the fellows, 'we are bailiffs, who yesterday arrested your cousin, Joe Haines, for £20, and you said you would satisfy us.' The bishop thought it best to do so. In James II.'s reign, Joe pretended to be a convert to the Catholic faith, and declared that the Virgin had appeared to him. Lord Sunderland sent for him, and asked him if this was really true. 'Yes, my lord,' replied Haines, 'I assure you 'tis a fact.' 'How was it, pray?' inquired my lord. 'Why, as I was lying in my bed, the Virgin appeared to me and said, "Arise, Joe!"' 'You lie, you rogue,' retorted Sunderland, 'for if it had been the Virgin herself she would have said Joseph, if it had only been out of respect for her husband.' After the Revolution he appeared upon the stage in a white sheet, with a taper in his hand, and delivered some doggrel rhymes in sign of recantation. He died in 1701, in Hart Street, Long Acre, then a fashionable quarter of the town.

In 1629 theatre-goers were so shocked by the appearance of women upon the public stage that they pelted them off. In Davenant's patent, issued thirty-one years afterwards, occurs this clause : 'Whereas the women's parts in plays

have hitherto been acted by men, at which some have taken offence, we do permit and give leave for the time to come that all women's parts be acted by women.' What a change in public opinion in so short a period! Yet boys continued to share in the performance of female characters some years after the Restoration. In 1672 'Philaster' and other pieces were acted at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields entirely by women, and Dryden wrote two indecent prologues for the occasion. Desdemona was the first English part sustained by a lady, and that important event in stage history took place on the 8th of December, 1660, at the Vere Street Theatre. A prologue, still extant, was written by one Thomas Jordan for the occasion, and entitled 'A Prologue to introduce the first woman that came to act on the stage, in the tragedy called "The Moor of Venice." ' The half-apologetic tone of the composition shows the experiment was approached with misgivings. How it was received has not been recorded, nor do we know the name of the person who had the honour to be the mother of the English stage. Pepys notes that on the 3rd of January, 1661, he for the first time saw women upon the stage in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Beggar's Bush.' Killigrew stole a march upon Davenant and introduced female performers before him. MRS. KNIPP is a name familiar to all readers of Pepys' 'Diary'; he dwells with great unction upon her loveliness and talents, and her excellent singing of his song, 'Beauty Retire.' Killigrew told him: 'Knipp is like to make the best actor that ever came upon the stage; she understanding so well that they are going to give her £30 a year more.' ANNE and 'BECK' MARSHALL were the daughters of Stephen Marshall, a noted Presbyterian. Pepys speaks of Beck's fine acting in Massinger's 'Virgin Martyr.' Both sisters were very beautiful women; Anne was the finer actress.

Of all Eve's frail daughters none have been regarded with more tenderness than NELL GWYNNE. A house is shown

at Hereford as her birthplace ; but the scene of that event, which took place in 1650, was more probably the Coal Yard, Drury Lane. Her early life was degraded enough, as a certain passage in Pepys proves. When little more than a child she sold oranges in the pit of the theatre, and her ready wit and powers of fascination rendered her a great favourite with the gallants of the playhouse, a crowd of whom would usually be gathered about her. By-and-by Hart, thinking her attractions might be turned to good account upon the stage, took her as a pupil and instructed her in acting. She made her first appearance at Drury Lane, in 1665, in Dryden's 'Indian Emperor,' being then about fifteen years of age. It is in that year Pepys first mentions her as 'pretty, witty Nell, at the King's House.' In 1666 he writes, 'Knipp took us all in (to a box at the theatre) and brought to us Nelly, a most pretty woman, who acted the great part, Celia, to-day (in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Humorous Lieutenant"), very fine, and did it very well. I kissed her, and so did my wife ; and a mighty pretty soul she is.' In the next year he sees her play in Dryden's 'Maiden Queen,' and falls into great raptures : 'There is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimal, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again by man or woman. The King and the Duke of York were at the play. But so great a performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girl, then most and best of all when she comes like a young gallant, and hath the motions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her.' In person she was below the middle height, with very small feet ; she was not beautiful, her eyes being very small, and they became almost invisible when she laughed, but the vivacity of her features made amends for other shortcomings. She was never a great actress, but rather fascinated by her sprightliness ; she sang and danced well. She left the stage for a time in 1667, and was seen by Pepys in company with

Lord Buckhurst at Epsom. ‘Poor girl,’ he says, ‘I pity her. But more the loss of her at the King’s House.’ In the same year he notes her return. ‘With my Lord Brouncher and his mistress to the King’s playhouse, and there saw “The Indian Emperour,” where I find Nell come again, which I am glad of; but was most infinitely displeased with her being put to act the Emperour’s daughter, which is a great and serious part, which she does most basely.’ Nelly could never play tragedy. In another entry, made soon afterwards, he tells us that Nell had been left by Lord Buckhurst, and that he was making sport of her, and swearing she had had all she could get out of him; and ‘Hart, her great admirer, now hates her, and that she is very poor, and hath lost my Lady Castlemaine, who was her great friend also; but she is come to the playhouse, but is neglected by them all.’ According to Curril, it was in speaking the Epilogue to Dryden’s ‘Tyrannic Love’ (1669), that she first captivated the King; and so strong was the impression she made upon him, that when the curtain fell, he went behind the scenes and carried her off there and then. It is one of Dryden’s wittiest efforts, and so appropriate to the speaker, that I transcribe the personal lines. As Valeria, she had stabbed herself at the end of the play, and the stage-keeper was about to carry her off, when up she sprang with

‘Hold ! are you mad ? You d——d confounded dog !  
I am to rise, and speak the epilogue.’

Then, to the audience :

‘I come, kind gentlemen, strange news to tell ye,  
I am the ghost of poor departed Nelly.  
Sweet ladies, be not frighted, I’ll be civil,  
I’m what I was, a little, harmless devil.’

In the prologue to another of Dryden’s plays, ‘The Conquest of Granada,’ she appeared in a straw hat, as large round as a cart-wheel, which almost entirely hid her. It was in ridicule of a piece that was being performed at the other

house. This seems to have been her last appearance upon the stage. Her wit and talent for mimicry, which were exercised upon every person of the court, pleased the King hugely; she held her empire over him to the last, and it is said was never unfaithful to him, not even after his death. There is a capital story told of her and Mademoiselle Querouaille (the Duchess of Portsmouth). This lady pretended that she was related to all the great families of France, and never omitted to put on mourning at the demise of any member of the French aristocracy. About the same time a French prince and the Cham of Tartary died. Mademoiselle Querouaille donned her mourning as usual, and, on this occasion, so did Nelly. She was asked for whom she had put on black. ‘For the Cham of Tartary,’ she answered. ‘What relation was he to you?’ was the laughing question. ‘The same that the prince was to Mademoiselle Querouaille,’ she retorted. She died in 1687, when only thirty-eight years of age. All her life she had been most charitable; of all the King’s mistresses she had been the only popular one; the mob never attacked her, and her name was usually, if not always, excepted from the lampoons and invectives so freely cast upon the others.

The King took a mistress from the Duke’s House under circumstances very similar to those just related—this was Mary or ‘MOLL’ DAVIES, who was supposed to be a natural daughter of the Earl of Berkshire. She was more celebrated as a dancer than as an actress. ‘Little Miss Davies,’ writes Pepys (1666), ‘did dance a jigg after the end of the play: so that it came in by force only to please the company, to see her dance in boy’s clothes; and the truth is, there is no comparison between Nell’s dancing the other day at the King’s House in boy’s clothes and this, this being infinitely beyond the other.’

She was equally charming as a singer; and it is said that she owed her disgraceful elevation to her beautiful singing

of the old ballad, ‘My Lodging is on the Cold Ground,’ and of another commencing,

‘I’ll crown thee with a garland of straw then,  
And marry thee with a rush ring ;’

fascinating the King by these ditties, as Nell Gwynne had done by her witty Epilogue. Her daughter, Mary Tudor, married the second Earl of Derwentwater.

In the same company was the beautiful MRS. DAVENPORT, of whom a romantic story is told in the Grammont Memoirs. A woman of unblemished virtue, she was, after most desperate importunities, entrapped into a sham marriage with the Earl of Oxford, who, after the honeymoon, brutally told her that the ceremony had been performed by his trumpeter, and was no marriage at all. Half distracted she sought the King, threw herself at his feet, and demanded justice. But the only reparation she could obtain was an annuity of £300 a year, upon which she retired from the stage.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### BETTERTON AND HIS ASSOCIATES.

Sir William Davenant and his company—The new theatre in Dorset Gardens—Rivalry—Degradation of the stage—Curious history of the patent—Betterton—His style of acting—High social position—Last appearance—A good story—Will Mountfort—His tragical fate—Kynaston, the famous boy-actress—Smith—A heavy villain—Verbruggen—Nohes—Leigh—Cave Underhill—Dick Esteourt—Anecdotes—The first great Lady Macbeth—Mrs. Mountfort—Cibber’s picture of her acting—Mrs. Bracegirdle—Anecdotes—Famous Mrs. Barry—Her early career—A Beautiful Quartette.

DAVENANT, the manager of the Duke’s company, is said to have been Shakespeare’s natural son; his mother, a very beautiful woman, kept the Crown Inn at Oxford, where the poet was accustomed to sleep, when journeying between

London and Stratford. He was the first who commenced the barbarous alterations and mutilations of Shakespeare, to better suit the corrupt and gallicised taste of the Court. In 1661, he removed his company from Salisbury Court to a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and there, according to general authorities, introduced scenery and decorations for the first time upon the public stage.

This house, however, was so small and inconvenient that a new one, designed by Wren, was erected by subscription in Dorset Gardens. Davenant died before its completion, and it was opened in 1671 under the management of Lady Davenant, Betterton, and Harris. A fierce rivalry arose between the two companies. The elaborate spectacles which were the especial attraction of Dorset Gardens were freely ridiculed at Drury Lane. Dryden attacked them in a prologue written for the opening of the new theatre after the fire :

‘ You who each day can theatres behold,  
Like Nero’s palace shining all with gold,  
Our mean ungilded stage will scorn, we fear,  
And for the homely room disdain the cheer.’

Long deprived of theatrical amusements, the people eagerly flocked to them upon their revival, and for some years both companies were exceedingly prosperous. Drury Lane had the finer actors, especially after Kynaston and several others seceded from Lincoln’s Inn; and when novelty began to wear off, this superiority told against Davenant, who was then obliged to resort to scenic displays and music, expensive dresses and decorations, as additional attractions. Both, after a time, began to suffer so much from a most contemptible rivalry, that they were driven to petition the King to suppress it--this was no more than a peepshow in Salisbury Change !

Rich, who had got possession of Drury Lane, is called by Gildon ‘an old snarling lawyer, a waspish, ignorant pettifogger, who disregarded the rights of all others concerned in

the patent, and appropriated all the profits to himself.' One of the principal adventurers, Sir Thomas Skipworth, in the year 1700, made a present of his share to Colonel Brett : but after a time, repenting of his generosity, sued the Colonel for restitution, and obtained it. Soon afterwards Sir Thomas, being indebted to a client of Rich's for a large sum of money, offered this share in payment. It was put up to auction, realised only eighty pounds, and was bought by the cunning lawyer himself, who thus became sole proprietor of the united patents of Davenant and Killigrew.

Cibber describes Rich as being 'as sly a tyrant as ever was at the head of a theatre ; for he gave the actors more liberty and fewer days' pay than any of his predecessors ; he would laugh with them over a bottle, and bite them in their bargains ; he kept them poor that they might not be able to rebel, and sometimes mimic that they might not think of it. All their articles of agreement had a clause in them that he was sure to creep out at.' That the stage, although it could then boast of one of the finest bodies of actors the world has ever seen, should decline under such a government could not be a matter of surprise. Its licentiousness, both behind and before the curtain, was answerable for the decline of public patronage. This view is taken by the author of '*Historia Histrionica*.' 'Better order was formerly kept among the company that came, which made very good people think a play an innocent diversion for an idle hour or two, the plays themselves being then, for the most part, more instructive and moral. Whereas of late the playhouses are so pestered with wizard masks and their trade (occasioning quarrels and abuses), that many of the more civilised part of the town are uneasy in the company, and shun the theatre as they would a house of scandal.'

Jeremy Collier's book (1697), full as it was of absurdities, did much to purify the stage, and the commencement of its reform may be dated from the appearance of that bitter diatribe.

It is now time to give some account of the famous actors who formed the amalgamated company in 1690. The greatest name on the list is THOMAS BETTERTON. This noble actor was born in Tothill Street, Westminster, in the year 1635 ; his father was under-cook to the King. Being of a studious disposition he was apprenticed to Rhodes, the bookseller, who had been wardrobe-keeper at the Blackfriars in Charles I.'s time, and who, as we have seen, was the first to obtain a theatrical license after the suppression of the theatres. Young Betterton, fired perhaps by the old man's stories of the past glories of the stage, joined his company, and from the first displayed dramatic talent of a very high order. In 1662 Davenant engaged Rhodes's entire company. Betterton soon became a great favourite of the King's, and Charles sent him over to Paris to observe the French theatres, and to adopt any improvements he might see there. In 1663 he married Mrs. Sanderson. When the pastoral of 'Calista, or the Chaste Nymph,' was represented at Court by the nobility, he was employed to instruct the gentlemen, while his wife was selected to tutor the Duke of York's daughters, Mary and Anne. In memory of which the last-named lady, when she became Queen, settled £100 a year upon Mrs. Betterton.

Pepys, after seeing him as early as 1661 in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Bondman,' calls him 'the best actor in the world.' 'Such an actor,' says Isaac Bickerstaff (*Tatler*, No. 167), 'as Mr. Betterton, ought to be recorded with the same respect as Roscius among the Romans . . . I have hardly a notion that any performer of antiquity could surpass the action of Mr. Betterton in any of the occasions in which he has appeared upon the stage.' In the same paper there is a fine criticism upon his Othello, well worth reading. Hart, however, was perhaps superior to him in the 'noble Moor'; but as Hamlet, all authorities combine in pronouncing him to have been unapproachable; he was instructed in the part by Davenant, who had frequently seen

it performed by Taylor, Burbadge's successor. Among Cibbers fine pictures of this actor's performance is one of the ghost scene, 'which,' he says, 'he opened with a pause of mute amazement ; then rising slowly, to a solemn trembling voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself ; and in the descriptive part of the natural emotions which the ghastly vision gave him, the boldness of his expostulation was still governed by decency—manly, but not braving : his voice never rising into that seeming outrage or wild defiance of what he naturally revered.' Booth used to say, 'When I played the Ghost to him, instead of awing him he terrified me.' 'A farther excellence in Betterton,' continues Cibber, 'was that he could vary his spirit to the characters he acted. Those wild, impatient starts, that fierce and flashing fire which he threw into Hotspur, never came from the unruffled temper of his Brutus ; when the Betterton Brutus was provoked, in his dispute with Cassius, his spirit flew only to his eye ; his steady look alone supplied that terror, which he disdained an intemperance in his voice should rise to. Thus with a settled dignity of contempt, like an unbending rock, he repelled upon himself the foam of Cassius.' 'Betterton,' says the same critic, in another place, 'had so just a sense of what was true or false applause, that I have heard him say, he never thought any kind of it equal to an attentive silence ; that there were many ways of deceiving an audience into a loud one : but to keep them hushed and quiet was an applause which only truth and merit could arrive at : of which art there never was equal master to himself. From these various excellences he had so full a possession of the esteem and regard of his auditors, that upon his entrance into every scene he seemed to seize upon the eyes and ears of the giddy and inadvertent.'

In *Tatler* No. 71, we read that he played Hamlet at seventy, 'and by the prevalent power of proper manner, gesture, and voice, appeared through the whole drama a

young man of great expectation, vivacity, and enterprise. The soliloquy where he began the celebrated sentence “To be, or not to be !” the expostulation where he explains with his mother in her closet ; the noble ardour after seeing his father’s ghost ; and his generous distress for the death of Ophelia, are each of them circumstances which dwell strongly upon the minds of the audience, and would certainly affect their behaviour on any parallel occasion in their own lives.’ Yet it was at threescore and ten this fine actor said that he was only just beginning to learn his difficult art !

Some of the universal eulogium which greeted Betterton was doubtless due to the high character and faultless life of the man, who in this respect was one of the noblest ornaments of his profession. So fortunate was he in pleasing everybody that he obtained the nickname of infallible Tom. There was no person in the land too high to honour him. He was a critic to whom Dryden listened with respectful attention, and he was the adviser of young Pope. Bishop Tillotson received him as a guest at his table ; and to those of his own profession, more especially to struggling beginners, he was ever a generous and encouraging friend and adviser. He was the first great actor Cibber had seen : as a youth Cibber had reverenced, almost worshipped him, and learned to see his great parts only with his eyes ; therefore no other actor ever approached him in his opinion. Yet Hart may fairly be placed above Betterton, as the former had the finer presence, and was equally excellent in tragedy and comedy, which was not the case with Betterton. For although he is said to have been admirable in Sir Toby Belch, Sir Solomon Single, and Falstaff, his appearance was ill-adapted to genteel comedy. Anthony Aston, whilst acknowledging him to be a ‘superlatively good actor,’ describes him as being clumsy in figure, with a large head, a short thick neck, and a stoop in the shoulders, small eyes, a broad pock-marked face ; as being corpulent in body, with thick legs, large feet, and short

fat arms that he rarely raised above his stomach ; his voice, he says, was ‘low and grumbling,’ yet, ‘he could attune it to an artful climax, which enforced universal attention even from fops and orange-girls.’ Cibber tells us that he did not exceed the middle stature, that his aspect was serious and penetrating, his limbs nearer athletic than delicate proportions, and his voice more manly than sweet ; which description is an euphuistic confirmation of Aston’s. His style must have been somewhat ponderous and artificial—more of the Kemble than of the Garrick school—as may be gathered from Cibber’s definition of perfect acting in the following passage :

‘The voice of a singer is not more strictly tied to time and tune, than that of an actor in theatrical elocution : the least syllable too long, or too slightly dwelt upon in a period, depreciates it to nothing ; while every syllable, if rightly touched, shall, like the brightening stroke of light from a master’s pencil, give life and spirit to the whole. I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton, wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination, were not fully satisfied ; which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any actor whatsoever.’ An elocution so nicely weighed would be tedious and pedantic to our modern ears. Aston tells us, ‘when he threw himself at Ophelia’s feet, he appeared a little too grave for a young student just from the University of Wittenberg,’ and that ‘his repartees were more those of a philosopher than the sporting flashes of young Hamlet.’ Something can be said in favour of the artificial as well as of the natural style of acting, for a truly great actor can make either acceptable. Garrick created a taste for the natural school ; the Kembles took back the audience to the artificial ; Kean made another revolution ; Macready a fourth ; the imitators of each wearied and disgusted audiences and made them eager for a change ; there were scores of actors who could strut, and mouth, and ‘imitate humanity so abominably,’ but only the Kembles could vivify this style with the

grandeur, the majesty, and *the soul* which made it great. Hundreds could rant and grimace, break metre in hoarse and unmusical accents, and ‘out-Herod Herod,’ but, unillumined by the lightning-flashes of Kean’s genius, it was all fustian. Yet the turgid pomposity of the one counterfeit is scarcely more objectionable to art than the flippant, vulgar, sham realisms of the other. Genius creates the fashion for its own style of expression. Talent *may* be imitated, but genius never.

Betterton’s last appearance upon the stage was on April 10, 1710, as Melantius, in ‘The Maid’s Tragedy,’ before one of the largest and most distinguished audiences ever gathered within the walls of a theatre. He was suffering at the time from a severe attack of gout, and before he could put one foot even into a slipper and limp upon the stage, he was obliged to use very violent applications. He greatly exerted himself, and acted with even more than his wonted spirit. Three days afterwards he was no more; the gout had been driven to his head, and it proved fatal. He had been during fifty-one years the delight of London theatre-goers. His funeral is the subject of one of the most beautiful papers in the *Tatler* (No. 167). ‘Having received notice,’ it begins, ‘that the famous actor, Mr. Betterton, was to be interred this evening in the cloisters near Westminster Abbey, I was resolved to walk thither and see the last offices done to a man whom I always very much admired, and from whose action I had received more strong impressions of what is great and noble in human nature, than from the arguments of the most solemn philosophers, or the descriptions of the most charming poets I have ever read.’

In his latter years Betterton was a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood of Reading. A farmer, one of his tenants, coming up to London to pay his rent while Bartholomew Fair was on, the actor took him, as a sort of treat, to see the humours of that wonderful assemblage. They went into a

puppet-show, and the countryman was so delighted with Punch that he swore he would drink with him. ‘But they are only rags and sticks,’ explained his conductor; an explanation which the former would not believe until he was taken behind the canvas and shown the puppets hanging up after their performance. At night Betterton placed him in front of the theatre. The play was ‘The Orphan,’ and he and Mrs. Barry were performing the principal parts. If Hodge was delighted with the puppets, how wonderfully would he be impressed by the sublime acting of these great flesh and blood performers! ‘Well, how dost like the play?’ was Betterton’s inquiry, upon meeting him after it was over. ‘I don’t know,’ answered the farmer, indifferently, ‘but it’s well enough for sticks and rags.’ Hodge was evidently a man of fixed ideas, and held tenaciously to those he received.

The next name in Cibber’s list is WILL MOUNTFORT, who, he says, was, in tragedy, the most affecting lover within his memory. ‘With a fine and handsome appearance, his addresses were resistless from the very tones of his melodious voice, which gave his words such softness, that,’ as Dryden says :

“Like flakes of feathered snow,  
They melted as they fell.”

In comedy he was inimitable. ‘He had a particular talent in giving life to *bon mots* and repartees; the wit of the poet seemed always to come from him extempore, and sharpened into more wit from his brilliant manner of delivering it. . . . He could at once throw off the man of sense, for the brisk, vain, rude, and lively coxcomb, the false, flashy pretender to wit, and the dupe of his own sufficiency.’

A melancholy and tragic end was poor Mountfort’s at the age of thirty-three. One Captain Hill, a *roué*, made desperate love to Mrs. Bracegirdle, who would not listen to his addresses. In some way the fellow got it into his head, perhaps because they played lovers in the comedies, that

Mountfort was a favoured rival, and the bar to his own success, an idea that had not the slightest foundation in truth. One night, in company with Lord Mohun, of duelling notoriety, and six hired ruffians, he endeavoured to carry off the actress, as she came out of the house of a friend she had been visiting. But her screams soon brought a rescue, and she was conducted home in safety. Baffled in his plot, Hill swore he would be revenged upon Mountfort, and waited about Norfolk Street, Strand, where he lodged, until they saw him returning home. Lord Mohun went up to him and saluted him ; as he did so, Hill came behind, and after striking him upon the head, passed his sword through the unfortunate actor's body, before he had time to draw in his defence. He died three days afterwards, and lies buried in St. Clement Danes. Lord Mohun surrendered himself, was tried by his peers, and acquitted ; whilst the actual assassin fled the country.

Of all the ‘boy-actresses,’ KYNASTON was the most famous. There is a portrait of him in a lady’s dress, still in existence ; the face is that of a beautiful girl, so charming, so simple, that it looks like a study by Greuze. Pepys records his visit to the Cockpit to see ‘The Loyal Subject’ (1660), ‘where one Kinaston, a boy, acted the Duke’s sister, but made the loveliest lady that ever I saw in my life.’ Later on in the same year he sees him in Jonson’s ‘Epicœne.’ ‘Among other things here, Kinaston, the boy, had the good turn to appear in three shapes : first as a poor woman in ordinary clothes, to please Morose ; then in fine clothes, as a gallant ; and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house : and lastly as a man ; and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house.’ Downes says, in ‘The Roscius Anglicanus,’ that it was a subject of dispute among the critics whether any woman thereafter touched the heart so deeply by her acting as he had done. Ladies of title used to take him into their coaches after the performance was over, and drive with him round the Park in

his stage dress (the play then commencing at three). It was for him that King Charles had to wait one night for the play to begin, while he was being shaved for the part of Evadne in ‘*The Maid’s Tragedy*.’ In after years he was equally fine in men’s parts. ‘He had a piercing eye,’ says Cibber, ‘and in characters of heroic life, a quick imperious vivacity, in his tone of voice, that painted the tyrant truly terrible.’ In Dryden’s ‘*Arungzebe*’ and in ‘*Don Sebastian*’ he had a fierce, lion-like majesty in his port and utterance that gave the spectator a kind of trembling admiration.’ Henry the Fourth was one of his greatest parts. ‘Every sentiment,’ says the same authority, ‘came from him as if it had been his own, as if he had himself that instant conceived it, as if he had lost the player, and were the real king he personated.’ He was even considered to rival Betterton, although his style of acting was entirely different. His stage career extended from 1659 to 1698, and he died in 1712.

SMITH, the original Chamont and Pierre of Otway’s ‘*Orphan*’ and ‘*Venice Preserved*,’ was pronounced by Booth to have been almost equal to Betterton. He was driven from the stage by a villainous combination. One night some sot behind the scenes, without any provocation, struck him; upon hearing this the King was so incensed that he banished the assailant from Court. The next night Smith was received with a storm of hisses from the exile’s friends; being a man of fortune he did not appear again upon the stage until 1696, when, after acting a few nights, he caught a chill which proved fatal.

SANDFORD was an actor of villains; ‘he was not a stage villain by choice, but by necessity; for having a low and crooked person, such bodily defects were too strong to be admitted into great or amiable character.’ So identified did he become in the public mind with these parts that it would accept him in no other. A new play was brought out, in which Sandford happened to perform the part of an honest statesman; the pit, after sitting during three or four acts, in

quiet expectation that his well-dissembled honesty—as they supposed it to be—would soon be discovered, or at least would involve the other characters in some great distress, discovering at the end of the play that Sandford was really an honest man, fairly damned it, as if the author had imposed upon them the most incredible absurdity. VERBRUGGEN, the original Oronoko, and so famous as Alexander that he was sometimes called by that name, was a noted tragedian of this time. He died in 1708.

NOKES is one of Cibber's most finished portraits. He describes him as an actor of quite a different genius to any he had ever read, heard of, or seen, since or before his time. He confesses, that though he had the sound of every line he had spoken in his ear, he had often tried, but in vain, to reach the least distant likeness of his *vis comica*. ‘He scarce ever made his first entrance into a play but he was received with an involuntary applause, not of hands only, for those may be, and have often been, partially prostituted and bespoken; but by a general laughter, which the very sight of him provoked, and nature could not resist; yet the louder the laugh, the graver was his look upon it; and sure, the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops into a titter, could he have been honour'd (may it be no offence to suppose it) with such grave and right reverend auditors. In the ludicrous distresses which, by the laws of comedy, folly is often involved in, he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot-point whether you ought not to have pity'd him. When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb studious powt, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content as the most absurd

thing he could say upon it. In the character of Sir Martin Marrall, who is always committing blunders to the prejudice of his own interest, when he had brought himself to a dilemma in his affairs by vainly proceeding upon his own head, and was afterwards afraid to look his governing servant and councillor in the face ; what a copious and distressful harangue have I seen him make with his looks (while the house has been in one continual roar for several minutes) before he could prevail with his courage to speak a word to him. Then might you have, at once, read in his face vexation, that his own measures, which he had piqued himself upon, had failed ; envy—of his servant's superior wit ; distress—to retrieve the occasion he had lost ; shame—to confess his folly ; and yet a sullen desire to be reconciled and better advised for the future. . . . His person was of the middle size ; his voice, clear and audible ; his natural countenance grave, and sober ; but the moment he spoke, the settled seriousness of his features was utterly discharged, and a dry, drolling, or laughing levity took such full possession of him, that I can only refer the idea of him to your imagination. In some of his low characters, that became it, he had a shuffling shamble in his gait, with so contented an ignorance in his aspect, and an awkward absurdity in his gesture, that had you not known him, you could not have believed that naturally he could have had a grain of common sense.'

LEIGH was a more mercurial actor, and inferior only to Nokes ; he was so much admired by King Charles, that he always spoke of him as 'my actor.' He died a week after Mountfort, in 1692. CAVE UNDERHIL was a comedian whose particular excellence lay in characters of 'still life—I mean the stiff, the heavy, and the stupid ; in some he looked as if it were not in the power of human passions to alter a feature of him. In the solemn formality of Obadiah, in "The Committee," and in the boorish heaviness of Lolpoop, in "The Squire of Alsatia," he seemed the immovable log

he stood for. A countenance of wood could not be more fixed than his, when the blockhead of a character required it ; his face was full and long ; from his crown to the end of his nose was the shorter half of it, so that the disproportion of his lower features, when soberly composed, with an unwandering eye hanging above them, threw him into the most lumpish moping mortal that ever made beholders merry.' In 1709 an appeal was made to the public, by the *Tatler*, for one 'who had been a comic for three generations.' He was a famous First Gravedigger, and it was in that part he took a final leave of the stage. 'But, alas,' adds Cibber, 'so worn and disabled, as if he himself was to have lain in the grave he was digging.' He died soon afterwards, a pensioner on the bounty of the patentees.

DICK ESTCOURT has been immortalised by Steele. 'The best man I know for heightening the revelry of a company is Estcourt, whose jovial humour diffuses itself from the highest person, at any entertainment, to the meanest waiter.' Cibber speaks slightlying of his acting, describing him as only an imitator of his predecessors, especially of Nokes. And it appears he was not alone in that estimate, for says Steele : 'It has as much surprised me as anything in Nature to have it frequently said that he was not a good player,' and he ascribes the opinion to a prejudice in favour of former actors of his parts. 'When a man of his wit and smartness could put on an utter absence of common sense in his face as he did in Bullfinch in "The Northern Lass," and an air of insipid cunning and vivacity in the character of Pounce in "The Tender Husband," it is folly to dispute his capacity.' But most famous was he as a mimic, and Steele discourses eloquently upon his talents in an admirable paper, wherein he also records his death (*Spectator*, No. 468). He was a great favourite of the Duke of Marlborough's ; and the first Providore of the Beef Steak Club, then just founded. About a year before his death, 1711, he became landlord of the Bumper Tavern, 27, St. James's Street, and Steele, in

*Spectator* 264, calls the attention of his admirers to the fact. Cibber says that he was such an extraordinary mimic that no man or woman, from the coquette to the privy councillor, ever moved or spoke before him, but he could carry their voice, look, mien and motion instantly into another company. One day Secretary Craggs with some of his friends went with Estcourt to Sir Godfrey Kneller's; and told him that a gentleman in company would give such a representation of some great men, his friends, as would surprise him. Estcourt mimicked Lord Somers exactly. Sir Godfrey was highly delighted and laughed at the joke; upon which Craggs gave the wink, and Estcourt then mimicked Kneller himself, who cried out immediately, '*Nay, there you are out, man; by G—, that is not me!*' He is buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

Of the ladies of this period the precedence, by date, must be given to Mrs. Sanderson,\* afterwards MRS. BETTERTON, an admirable actress. Pepys, who always calls her Ianthe, from the part she played in 'The Siege of Rhodes,' praises her sweet voice. Cibber says 'she was so great a mistress of Nature, that even Mrs. Barry, who acted Lady Macbeth after her, could not in that part, with all her superior strength and melody of voice, throw out those quick and careless strokes of terror, from the disorder of a guilty mind, which the other gave us, with a facility in her manner that rendered them at once tremendous and delightful.' He adds that she chiefly excelled in the plays of Shakespeare, in which she was without a rival. She retired from the stage some years before her husband, in 1694, and survived him only eighteen months, dying of grief for his death.

MRS. MOUNTFORT, who afterwards married Verbruggen, was even more famous than her husband, and Cibber says, 'was mistress of more variety of humour than I ever knew.'

\* Previous to the first two or three decades of the eighteenth century, the term 'mistress' was used to designate both single and married ladies; 'miss' being only applied to women of loose character.

in any one woman actress.' His sketch of this lady is the finest of all his fine portraits. She was equally at home in the broadest personation of a country wench and in the finest of fine ladies: 'In a play of D'Urfey's, now forgotten, called "The Western Lass," which part she acted, she transformed her whole being, body, shape, voice, language, look, and features, into almost another animal; with a strong Devonshire dialect, a broad laughing voice, a poking head, round shoulders, an unconceiving eye, and the most bediz'ning dowdy dress that ever covered the untrained limbs of a Joan Trot. To have seen her here, you would have thought it impossible the same creature could ever have been recovered, to what was as easy to her, the gay, the lively, and the desirable. Nor was her humour limited to her sex; for while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty fellow, than is usually seen upon the stage. Her easy air, action, mien, and gesture, quite changed from the quoif, to the cocked hat, and cavalier in fashion. People were so fond of seeing her a man, that when the part of Bayes in the "Rehearsal," had, for some time, lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true, coxcombly spirit and humour, that the sufficiency of the character required. But what found most employment for her whole various excellence at once, was the part of Melantha, in '*Mariage à la Mode*.' Melantha is as finished an impertinent as ever fluttered in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most complete system of female foppery, that could possibly be crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady. Her language, dress, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry to be something more than is necessary or commendable. And though I doubt it will be a vain labour, to offer you a just likeness of Mrs. Mountfort's action, yet the fantastic impression is still so strong in my memory, that I cannot help saying something, though fantastically, about it. The first ridiculous airs that break from her, are, upon a gallant never seen before, who delivers her

a letter from her father, recommending him to her good graces, as an honourable lover. Here now, one would think she might naturally show a little of the sex's decent reserve, though never so lightly covered. No, sir; not a tittle of it. Modesty is the virtue of a poor-soul'd country gentlewoman; she is too much a Court lady, to be under so vulgar a confusion; she reads the letter, therefore, with a careless, dropping lip, and an erected brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands, by making a complete conquest of him at once; and that the letter might not embarrass her attack, crack, she crumbles it at once, into her palm, and pours upon him her whole artillery of airs, eyes, and motion; down goes her dainty, diving body, to the ground, as if she were sinking under the unconscious load of her own attractions; then launches into a flood of fine language, and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water; and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit, that she will not give her lover leave to praise it: silent assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which, at last, he is relieved from, by her engagement to half a score visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling.' She died in 1703.

MRS. BRACEGIRDLE may be said to have been reared in the theatre, for she made her first appearance, as a page, at six years old. She was a *protégée* and pupil of the Bettertons. From 1680 to 1707, 'never,' says Cibber, 'was any woman in such general favour of the spectators.' Her private character was unimpeachable, for the hints of such a dissolute fellow as Tom Brown are no proofs against the universal testimonies in her favour. When one of her would-be lovers, the Earl of Burlington, sent her by a footman a present of china and a letter, she kept the letter, but made the servant take back the china, saying he had made a mistake, as that was for his lady. And his lady got it, much doubt-

less to her surprise and gratification, and to my lord's chagrin. 'She was the darling of the theatre,' to again quote Cibber, 'for it will be no extravagant thing to say, scarce an audience saw her that were less than half of them lovers, without a suspected favourite among them; and though she may be said to have been the universal passion, and under the highest temptation, her constancy in resisting them served but to increase her admirers. It was even a fashion among the gay and young to have a taste or *tendre* for Mrs. Bracegirdle.' In Dryden's epilogue to 'King Arthur,' written for her, allusion is made to these unceasing importunities, and it commences with—

'I have had to-day a dozen billets-doux  
From fops, and wits, and cits, and Bow Street beaux :  
Some from Whitehall, but from the Temple more :  
A Covent Garden porter brought me four.'

She then proceeds to read one or two of these effusions, probably rhymed from originals actually received.

Of her personal appearance it was said: 'She had no greater claim to beauty than the most desirable brunette might pretend to. But her youth and lively aspect threw out such a glow of health and cheerfulness, that on the stage few spectators could behold her without desire.' Cibber is scarcely just to her attractions, for in the portrait I have seen the features are most charming. 'If anything could excuse the frantic passion of Lee's Alexander the Great, it must have been when Mrs. Bracegirdle was his Statira: as when she acted Millamant, all the faults, follies, and affectations of that agreeable tyrant, were venially melted down into so many charms and attractions of a conscious beauty.' Congreve was her devoted admirer: she was the original representative of all his heroines, and there was a warm friendship between them unto the end of his life. He wrote:

'Pious Belinda goes to prayers  
Whene'er I ask the favour :  
Yet the tender fool's in tears  
When she believes I'll leave her.'

Would I were free from this restraint,  
Or else had power to win her,  
Would she could make of me a saint,  
Or I of her a sinner.'

The Lords Dorset, Devonshire, and Halifax presented her with the sum of eight hundred pounds, simply as a mark of their esteem for her private character. She was a charitable woman too, and would go into Clare Market to assist the poor unemployed basket-women ; and on passing through that neighbourhood she was greeted with the grateful salutations of people of all degrees. She retired from the stage in 1707, in the very height of her fame ; but beautiful Anne Oldfield had arisen, and her youth and brilliant talents were casting the elder actress into the shade. Mrs. Bracegirdle lived many years afterwards, dying in 1748 at over four-score. She returned to the stage for a single night, to play Angelica in '*Love for Love*' for her old friend Betterton's benefit.

ELIZABETH BARRY was the daughter of a barrister who raised a troop for the service of Charles I. Currل says that Lady Davenant, out of friendship for his memory, reared and educated his daughter, and recommended her to adopt the stage as a profession. Antony Aston, however, who was living in her time, asserts, that 'she was woman to Lady Shelton, of Norfolk (my good mother), when Lord Rochester took her on the stage, where, for some time, they could make nothing of her ; she could neither sing, nor dance, no, not even in a country dance.' To be 'woman,' however, to a lady of title, in those days, was considered a position not derogatory to a person of good family, fallen upon evil times. All agree that at first she showed such little capacity for her profession that she was pronounced utterly incapable, and dismissed from the theatre three times in succession. Then, according to Currل's story, Rochester, who seems to have entertained a real affection for her, made a wager that within six months he would train her to be one of the finest actresses upon the stage. He took incredible pains with his task,

made her rehearse some parts thirty times in the dresses and exactly as she was to perform them at night. She made her first appearance as the Queen of Hungary, in Lord Orrery's play of 'Mustapha,' in the year 1673 or 1674, astonishing everyone who remembered her previous failures. Although to Rochester she was indebted for the training that developed her latent talents, it was the genius of Otway that brought forth its full splendour in *Monimia* and *Belvidera*. She was mistress of every passion of the mind: love, joy, grief, rage, tenderness, and jealousy were all represented by her with equal skill and effect. Cibber says that in characters of greatness her presence was full of dignity, her mien and motion superb and gracefully majestic, her voice so full, clear, and strong that no violence of passion could be too much for her; that in the art of exciting pity she had a passion beyond all the actresses he had ever seen, or that imagination could conceive; that in scenes of anger and defiance she was impetuous and terrible. Aston speaks highly of her comedy. She was the original Clarissa in the 'Confederacy,' Lady Brute in 'The Provoked Wife,' and Calista in Rowe's 'Fair Penitent.' She created one hundred and nineteen parts, among them many of the most famous of the drama. So delighted was Mary of Modena with her impersonation of Queen Elizabeth in 'The Unhappy Favourite,' that, when Duchess of York, she presented her with her own wedding-dress for the part, and after she became Queen, with her coronation robes.\* Mrs. Barry was the first performer to whom a benefit was given; a privilege first accorded her in the year 1687, on account of her extraordinary abilities.† Her last appearance upon the stage was as Lady Easy in the 'Careless Husband,' on June 13, 1710. The

\* It was not an uncommon custom for the nobility, and even the sovereigns, to send their cast-off dress-suits to the theatre wardrobes.

† So says Cibber; but in Gildon's 'Life of Betterton,' there is a copy of an agreement, dated 1681, between Charles Hart, Edward Kynaston, and other actors, in which it is stipulated that the sum of five shillings shall be paid to each of the latter on every performance, 'excepting the days the young men or young women play for their own profit only.'

closing years of her life were passed in rural retirement, in the Vale of Acton. She died in 1713, and is buried in the south aisle of Acton Church, where there is a tablet to her memory.

Davies says: ‘The stage perhaps never produced four such handsome women at once as Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Brace-girdle, Mrs. Mountfort, and Mrs. Bowman. When they stood together in the last scene of ‘The Old Bachelor,’ the audience was struck with so fine a group of beauty, and broke into loud applause.’

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### COLLEY CIBBER AND HIS ASSOCIATES.

His early career—How he obtained his first salary—His first success—

His first play—More disappointments—‘Richard the Third’ and the ‘Careless Husband’—The new theatre in the Haymarket—Suspension of the Drury Lane patent—Dogget—Wilkes—His extraordinary diligence—A sketch of the triumvirate—In council—Barton Booth—His success as ‘Cato’—Proposed as a sharer—Miss Santlow—Cibber’s quarrel with Pope—His retirement—His Justice Shallow—His death—George Powel—Holden—Joe Miller—Mrs. Oldfield—Mrs. Rogers—Mrs. Porter—Lavinia Fenton.

IT was malice alone, not truth nor justice, that made Pope fix upon Colley Cibber as the second hero of ‘The Dunciad.’ Theobald might have deserved such a distinction, but there was no man of that day to whom the term ‘dullard’ could be less appropriately applied than to the witty creator of Lord Foppington and Lady Betty Modish, the author of ‘The Apology,’ of ‘The Careless Husband,’ the *collaborateur* of Vanbrugh in ‘The Provoked Husband,’ and one of the finest comedians of the age. Yet Pope has familiarised the name of Cibber—as he has those of so many others less deserving of immortality—to thousands who

otherwise might have never heard of it ; while many actors of his generation, even more famous than he, are now almost unknown, except to students of dramatic literature.

Cibber was born in 1671 in Southampton Street, Strand ; his father, who was a sculptor and a native of Holstein, had come over to England previous to the Restoration. His handiwork may still be seen on the base of the Monument, and in the figures of Raving and Melancholy Madness over the gates of Bedlam. The mother, whose maiden name was Colley, was of a good old Northamptonshire family. Young Cibber was sent to the Grantham Free Grammar School, where he obtained such education as such institutions then afforded.

He tried for a scholarship at Winchester, but failed. Already, however, he had conceived a predilection for the stage, and rather rejoiced in his failure. When the Revolution broke out, his father was engaged upon some important work at Chatsworth, and joined the forces which the Duke of Devonshire raised to aid the Prince of Orange. Considering his son, however, better able to undertake such duties than himself, he begged the Duke to accept him as a substitute. In this capacity Colley had the honour of being one of an escort sent out from Nottingham to meet the Princess Anne, when she fled from London in company with Lady Churchill ; at table that night he was appointed to wait upon the last-named lady—and fell desperately in love with her ! There was nothing else remarkable in Mr. Cibber's military career, and the contingent to which he belonged was very soon discharged. The Duke promised to consider what could be done for this promising young man, who forthwith went off to London to become a dangler about the theatre.

In 1690 he was admitted within the magic circle. It was not a profitable advancement, as one of the rules of the patentees was that every tyro should serve half a year's probation before receiving any pay. ‘Pay,’ he says, ‘was the

least of my concern; the joy and privilege of every day seeing plays for nothing, I thought was a sufficient consideration for the best of my services. So that it was no pain to my patience that I waited three quarters of a year, before I was taken into a salary of ten shillings a week, which, with the assistance of food and raiment at my father's house, I then thought a most plentiful accession, and myself the happiest of mortals. The first thing that enters into the head of a young actor is that of being a hero. In this ambition I was soon snubbed, by the insufficiency of my voice; to which might be added, an uninformed meagre person (though then not ill-made) with a dismal pale complexion.' He was known in the theatre by the name of Master Colley; after waiting for some time he obtained the honour of carrying on a message, in some play, to Betterton; but was so terrified or so nervous that the entire scene was disconcerted by him. Betterton angrily demanded who the young fellow was. Downes, the prompter, replied, 'Master Colley.' 'Then forfeit Master Colley,' replied the tragedian: 'Why, sir, he has no salary,' said Downes. 'No? Then put him down ten shillings a week, and forfeit him five.' And to this accident Cibber was indebted for the first money he ever received from his profession.

In 1693, before he was twenty-two, he married, upon twenty pounds a year allowed by his father, and twenty shillings a week salary. And he would have done so upon a less income, but for an accident. A performance of the 'Double Dealer' was commanded by Queen Mary. Kynaston, who was to play Touchwood, being taken ill the day before, Congreve recommended that the part should be given to Cibber, and was so pleased with his rendering that he spoke to the patentees in his favour, who thereupon advanced him from fifteen to twenty shillings. But professionally his elevation was but momentary: he sank back into his old insignificance, and when he wrote a prologue for the opening night of the season, two years later, although the manage-

ment declared him to be a ‘very ingenious young man,’ and presented him with two guineas, he was not considered worthy to deliver it. He struggled on with his young wife, who had by this time made an addition to his incumbrances and was promising another. He might have waited until his hair was grey for the longed-for promotion, but for a convulsion in the theatrical world which happened in 1695, and broke up the company. Here was a chance for aspirants to come to the fore, and many did, but not, according to Cibber, very advantageously. Cibber, however, never spoke well of his contemporaries, and the secret of poor Colley’s spleen is probably contained in this sentence: ‘None of those great parts ever fell to my share, nor indeed could I get one good part of any kind till many months after, unless it were of that sort which nobody else cared for or would venture to expose themselves in. The first unintended favour, therefore, of a part of any value, necessity threw upon me.’

There was deadly feud between the two theatres, and each strained every nerve to steal a march upon the other. The Drury Lane company having announced that they would perform ‘Hamlet’ for the first time, on a certain date, Lincoln’s Inn Fields issued bills for the representation of that tragedy on the same evening. The Drury Company were struck with consternation. To bring their Hamlet in competition with Betterton’s was not to be thought of; the piece must be changed. The one substituted was Congreve’s ‘Old Bachelor.’ This choice was made by Powel, who thought to revenge himself by mimicking Betterton in the principal character. New bills were immediately issued and books of the comedy sent for, there not being two of the company who had ever played in the piece, and there were only six hours to the rise of the curtain. But in looking through the cast a new difficulty presented itself. Fondlewife, Dogget’s great part, had been forgotten. In desperation, somebody suggested that Cibber at different

times had been heard to express a great desire to play that character. There were head-shakings ; but Powel, bent upon his small revenge, adopted his suggestion with the very ungracious remark, ‘ If the fool has a mind to blow himself up at once, let us even give him a clear stage for it.’ So it was agreed. Colley had so often witnessed Dogget’s performance that he was nearly perfect in the words, and even rehearsed from memory, while all the others were obliged to read from their books. Powel had resolved to imitate Betterton, Cibber resolved to reproduce Dogget. ‘ At my first appearance,’ he says, ‘ one might have imagined by the various murmurs of the audience, that they were in doubt whether Dogget himself were not returned, or that they could not conceive what strange face it could be that so nearly resembled him, for I had laid the tint of forty years more than my real age upon my features, and to the minute placing of a hair was dressed exactly like him. When I spoke the surprise was still greater, as if I had not only borrowed his clothes, but his voice too. A much better actor might have been proud of the applause that followed me ; after one loud plaudit was ended, and sunk into a general whisper, that seemed still to continue their private approbation, it revived to a second, and again to a third still louder than the former.’ Dogget himself was in the pit contemplating his double ! But not even this triumph could procure his advancement, and he was again dropped back into his former position ; indeed his success was turned against him, for it was presumed that he was unsuited to any other line of character, and his application for parts was always met with, ‘ It is not in your way.’ His answer indicates the true artist : ‘ I think anything, naturally written, ought to be in everybody’s way that pretends to be an actor.’ ‘ This,’ he says, ‘ was looked upon as vain, impracticable conceit of my own.’

These rebuffs, as he says, were ‘ enough, perhaps, to make a young fellow of more modesty despair ; but being of a

temper not easily disheartened, I resolved to leave nothing unattempted that might show me in some new rank of distinction. Having then no other resource, I was at last reduced to write a character for myself.' The play, upon which he was engaged a whole year, was '*Love's Last Shift*' ; the principal part, Sir Novelty Fashion, was a satire upon the fopperies of the day. He induced Southerne to hear him read it, and the veteran dramatist was so well satisfied that he recommended it to the patentees. While he was standing at the wing before the play commenced, on the first night, Southerne took him by the hand and said : 'Young man ! I pronounce thy play a good one ; I will answer for its success, if thou dost not spoil it by thy own action.' But the success of both author and actor was so great that people were in doubt to which they should give the preference. The Lord Chamberlain pronounced it to be the best first play that any author had produced within his memory ; and that for a young fellow to show himself such an actor and such a writer in one day was something extraordinary.

Yet even this double success failed to permanently improve Cibber's position ; another year elapsed, and, although he had proved his versatility by his admirable rendering of such widely dissimilar characters as the uxorious old Fondlewife, and the exquisite fop Sir Novelty Fashion, no fresh part of any importance was entrusted to him. But it is said that all things come to the man who can wait, and twelve months after the production of his comedy, Vanbrugh wrote a sequel to it, '*The Relapse*', in which Sir Novelty, now ennobled as Lord Foppington, was assigned to Cibber. This continued throughout his life to be one of his most famous parts. '*The Relapse*' was Vanbrugh's first work, and a few months afterwards he brought out '*Aesop*', and Cibber was as successful in the title-rôle as he had been as Lord Foppington. By this time he had arrived at the munificent salary of thirty shillings per week,

which Christopher Rich, who was now sole manager of the theatre, did not always pay. ‘While the actors were in this condition,’ he says, ‘I think I may very well be excused in my presuming to write plays, which I was forced to do, for the support of my increasing family, my precarious income as an actor being then too scant to supply it with even the necessaries of life. It may be observable, too, that my wife and my muse were equally prolific; that the one was seldom the mother of a child but in the same year the other made me the father of a play.’

His second comedy, ‘Woman’s Wit’ (1697), was a dead failure; the same may be said of ‘Xerxes,’ a tragedy (1699). In 1700, he produced his famous alteration of Shakespeare’s ‘Richard the Third’—the Richard of Garrick, Cooke, Kean, which kept the stage, to the exclusion of the original play, until Mr. Irving’s revival of the original text.\* Although very inferior to the tragedy upon which it was founded, it is a remarkably clever piece of stage-craft, the cleverest of all the Shakespearian alterations, and has outlived them all. ‘Love Makes a Man’ followed in the next year; ‘She Wou’d and She Wou’d Not,’ a capital comedy of intrigue, of the Spanish school, full of bustle and situation, was produced in 1703. In 1704, he brought out his finest work, ‘The Careless Husband,’ into which he again brought his old favourite, Lord Foppington. This was a great advance upon ‘Love’s Last Shift,’ which, says Congreve, ‘had in it many things that were like wit, that in reality were not wit, and has a great deal of puerility and frothy stage language in it.’ ‘The Careless Husband’ would not be acceptable to a modern audience, in spite of its witty and frequently brilliant dialogue; it has little situation; the serious scenes, as is the case in all his plays, are strained and pedantic; Sir

\* For the brief revivals of Shakespeare’s play by Macready at Covent Garden in 1821, and by Phelps at Sadler’s Wells in 1844, were little more than experiments, and much of Cibber’s clap-trap was retained by Macready.

Charles, Lady Easy, and Morelove are tedious characters ; the famous fop and libertine, Lord Foppington, admirably as he pictured the fine gentlemen of that day, is now obsolete, for coxcombray changes its form with every change of fashion and manners, and the exquisite of to-day is quite a different person to that of our youth. The gem of the play, however, and one of the finest comic conceptions of the last century, is Lady Betty Modish, the vain, frivolous, tormenting coquette, yet, at the bottom, good-hearted woman of fashion. Such a character, stripped of the colouring and conventionalities of the age, is as true to nature now as it was then. It is also remarkable as having brought into fame the celebrated Mrs. Oldfield, of whom more anon.

Only a few years previously, the Drury Lane company could scarcely hold their own against their rivals ; but the tables were beginning to turn. Betterton's company was entirely made up of veterans whose powers were fast decaying ; 'and though,' says Cibber, 'we were too young to be excellent, we were not too old to be better.' 'But,' he adds, 'what will not society deprecate? For though I must own and avow, in our highest prosperity, I always thought we were greatly their inferiors, yet by our good fortune of being seen in quite new lights, which several new-written plays had shown us in, we now began to make a considerable stand against them.'

The theatre in Portugal Street was only a Tennis Court, small in size and poorly fitted up. In 1705, Sir John Vanbrugh started a project for building a theatre in the Hay-market ; a subscription of one hundred pounds each was raised among thirty persons of quality, and this gave them free admission for life. Betterton and his company placed themselves under Vanbrugh's direction. The house opened with an opera translated from the Italian, the first ever produced in this country, entitled 'The Triumph of Love.' It was performed only three days to indifferent houses, upon which Sir John produced his finest comedy, 'The Con-

federacy.' But the grand company had now sadly fallen from its high estate. Smith, Kynaston, Sandford, and Leigh were dead, and Mrs. Betterton and Underhil had retired. The speculation was not successful ; the house was badly constructed for speaking ; it was surrounded by green fields ; and, said Cibber, 'the City, the Inns of Court, and the middle part of the town, which were the most constant support of a theatre, were now too far out of the reach of an easy walk, and coach-hire is often too hard a task upon the pit and gallery.' A union of the two houses was proposed, but to this Rich would not agree. Then Vanbrugh made over the new theatre, which was called the Queen's, to Mr. Owen Swiney, at a rental of five pounds for every acting day, and not to exceed seven hundred in the year. A dispute over the terms of their benefits, of which the patentees desired to rob them of about a third of their due, so incensed the actors that they appealed to the Lord Chamberlain for protection, who not only granted their petition, but he punished their oppressor by suspending his patent. Leave was given to Swiney to enlist as many of the actors of Drury Lane as would head a company under their own management, and to be sharers with him. Those who went over were Wilks, Dogget, Estcourt, Mills, Johnson, Bullock, Mrs. Oldfield, and, a little later, Cibber. The deserters were now masters of the situation ; dramatic performances were alternated with operatic ; but the speculation was not particularly successful, which Cibber ascribes to the enormous excitement attending the trial of Dr. Sacheverell, the event which was then absorbing the attention of all classes of people.

After some further vicissitudes the actors were once more united at Old Drury ; and in 1714, a license was granted, during the Queen's pleasure, in the names of Collier, Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget. Collier, by whose interest the license had been procured, was the first commissioned manager, and although his position was only a sinecure. he was paid £700

a year. Yet until 1714, the three comedians never realised less than £1,000 a year.

John Rich, the son of Christopher, then just dead, obtained leave to open a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields (1714) under the united patent of Killigrew and Davenant. This considerably lessened the receipts at the old house ; as a compensation, however, Steele exerted his influence, and successfully, to have the license changed to a patent.

Before proceeding farther with Cibber's individual career, let us turn to those associates in management with whom he was now so closely connected.

DOGGET was of humble origin ; had strolled the provinces before his talents procured him a foremost position upon the London stage, where he made his first appearance in 1691. ‘He was the most original, and the strictest observer of Nature of all his contemporaries,’ says Cibber. ‘He borrowed from none of them ; his manner was his own ; he was a pattern to others, whose greatest merit was, that they had sometimes tolerably imitated him. In dressing a character to the greatest exactness, he was remarkably skilful ; the least article of whatever habit he wore seemed in some degree to speak and mark the different humour he presented. He could be extremely ridiculous, without stepping into the least impropriety to make him so. His greatest success was in characters of lower life, which he improved from the delight he took in his observations of that kind in the real world. In songs and particular dances too, of humour, he had no competitor. Congreve was a great admirer of him, and found his account in the characters he expressly wrote for him. In those of Fondlewife in “The Old Bachelor,” and Ben in “Love for Love,” no author and no actor could be more mutually obliged. He was very acceptable to several persons of high rank and taste, though he seldom cared to be the comedian but among his more intimate acquaintance.’

He could paint his face to exactly represent any age,

seventy, eighty, ninety. Sir Godfrey Kneller told him one day at Button's that he excelled him in painting; for that he could only copy nature from the originals before him, but that he (Dogget) could vary them at pleasure, and yet keep a close likeness. No temptation could ever induce him to step out of his own line of characters, by which prudence he always appeared equally excellent. His great passion was stock-jobbing, and no man was better known upon 'Change, for every moment he could spare from his professional duties was passed there. He was one of the most thorough-going Whigs of the day; and, to celebrate the accession of George I., he left in his will a sum of money for the well-known coat and badge, to be rowed for each year from London Bridge to Chelsea, on the 1st August, by six Thames watermen. He was obstinate and testy, and so impatient of crosses and contradictions, that he left the stage for three years, because he could not endure the common annoyances inseparable from his profession.

In striking contrast to this crabbed, eccentric money-grubber, was the third member of the triumvirate, ROBERT WILKS. He came of a good Worcestershire family settled at Bromsgrove. His grandfather, Judge Wilks, raised a troop of horse for Charles I., and brought himself to beggary. The father of Robert went over to Ireland, where the boy was born in 1665. He began life as a government clerk in Dublin, came to London and waited upon Mr. Betterton to ask his advice. The great actor referred him to the manager, Christopher Rich, who, liking his manner and appearance, engaged him upon a salary of fifteen shillings a week, from which half-a-crown was to be deducted for instruction in dancing. This was in 1690, he being then twenty-five years of age. And upon this income young Wilks married. Promising as he was, he, like Cibber, had little chance of distinguishing himself among so many experienced rivals; but he had not the patience of Colley, and, after vainly soliciting an advance of salary, resolved to seek his fortune

elsewhere. ‘I fancy,’ said Betterton, upon his departure, ‘that that gentleman’ (Rich, the manager), ‘if he has not too much obstinacy to own it, will be the first that repents your parting, for, if I foresee aright, you will be greatly wanted here.’ His words were prophetic. Wilks was, at Betterton’s recommendation, engaged by the manager of the Dublin theatre, at sixty pounds a year and a clear benefit. His success in the Irish capital was soon assured, and such reports of his acting came across the Channel that by-and-by, after Mountfort’s death had left an irreparable breach in his forces, Rich offered him four pounds a week, a most tempting salary in those days, to return. Wilks was ready to accept it, but the Dublin manager was so averse to losing him that he prevailed upon the Lord-Lieutenant to issue an order to prevent him leaving the country. Wilks, however, being warned in time, contrived to effect his escape, and reappeared at Drury Lane, in 1699, as Palamede in Dryden’s ‘Mariage à la Mode.’

His study was so minute and exact that it is said, that in the course of forty years he never changed or misplaced an article in one of his parts; and this, no matter how bad it might be. ‘I have been astonished,’ says his colleague, ‘to see him swallow a volume of froth and insipidity, in a new play, that we were sure could not live three days.’ In some new comedy he happened to complain of a crabbed speech, which he said gave him more trouble to study than all the rest of it had done; and upon the difficulty being pointed out, the author excised it. But when he returned home from the rehearsal, Wilks considered it such an indignity to his memory that anything should be thought too hard for it, that he actually made himself perfect in that speech, although he knew it was never to be made use of. Wilks’s excellence, indeed, was entirely the result of unremitting study, for nature had given him a harsh and inharmonious voice, and he does not appear to have had much of that intuitive apti-

tude for his profession which distinguished such born actors as Betterton, Garrick Kean.

Wilks was the original representative of all the fine gentlemen of Cibber's comedies, and of nearly all Farquhar's heroes, Mirable, Plume, Archer—and Sir Harry Wildair, most famous of all his parts, which put the town in ecstasies, and nightly crammed the theatre to the ceiling. He became so identified with this character, that it was said, whatever he acted the vulgar spectators turned their thoughts upon Sir Harry. He was the most mercurial of comedians; indeed, Cibber complains, that his vivacity was sometimes too evident. ‘But whatever he did upon the stage, let it be ever so trifling, whether it consisted in putting on his gloves, or taking out his watch, lolling on his cane, or taking snuff, every movement was marked by such an ease of breeding and manner, everything told so strongly the involuntary motion of a gentleman, that it was impossible to consider the character he represented, in any other light than that of reality.’ In the lighter parts of tragedy he was almost equally eminent. Steele said of him, ‘to beseech gracefully, to approach respectfully, to pity, to mourn, to love, are the places wherein Wilks may be said to shine with the utmost beauty.’ His Hamlet was a fine performance, which was lovingly remembered even after Garrick’s great success in the part; his Prince Hal was unequalled. Chetwood says, no actor he had ever seen was equal to Wilks in the expression of manly sorrow. He was the finest Macduff of his day, and never failed to draw the tears of the audience in his heart-broken lament over the fate of his wife and children.

Speaking of his private character, Cibber complains that his temper was so violent and overbearing that several actors, upon the opening of the new theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, left them and went over to Rich; and that Dogget afterwards confessed to him that his secession from the partnership was really on that account. Yet he acknowledges, that to his diligence and impatience of neglect was

due that strict discipline which was one of the secrets of success. ‘Had I had half his application,’ says the old actor, ‘I still think I might have shown myself twice the actor, that in my highest state of favour I appeared to be.’ He died in 1732, at the age of seventy-six. He was buried in St. Paul’s, Covent Garden, at *midnight*, by his own request, to avoid all ostentation. But the choir of the King’s Chapel attended voluntarily to perform an anthem.

Cibber’s sketch of the triumvirate in their managerial capacity, gives us a striking picture of their opposite characters. ‘At this time we were all in the vigour of our capacities as actors; and our prosperity enabled us to pay, at least, double the salaries to what the same actors had usually received, or could have hoped under the patentees. Dogget, who was naturally an economist, kept our expenses and accounts, to the best of his power, within regulated bounds and moderation. Wilks, who had a stronger passion for glory than lucre, was a little too apt to be lavish in what was not always as necessary for the profit as the honour of the theatre; for example, at the beginning of almost every season he would order two, or three, suits to be made, or refreshed, for actors of moderate consequence, that his having constantly a new one for himself might seem less particular, though he had as yet no new part for it. This expeditious care of doing us good, without waiting for our consent to it, Dogget always looked upon with the eye of a man in pain. But I, who hated pain (though I as little liked the favour as Dogget himself), rather chose to laugh at the circumstance than complain of what I knew was not to be cured, but by a remedy worse than the evil. Upon these occasions, therefore, whenever I saw him and his followers so prettily dressed out for an old play, I only commended his fancy, or at most but whispered him not to give himself so much trouble about others, upon whose performance it would but be thrown away. To which, with a smiling air of triumph over my want of penetration, he has replied, “Why,

now, that was what I really did it for—to show others that I love to take care of them as well as myself." Thus, whenever he made himself easy he had not the least conception, let the expense be what it would, that we could possibly dislike it. And from the same principle, provided a thinner audience were liberal of their applause, he gave himself little concern about the receipts of it. As in these different tempers of my brother managers there might be equally something right and wrong, it was equally my business to keep well with them both; and though of the two, I was rather inclined to Dogget's way of thinking, yet I was always under the disagreeable restraint of not letting Wilks see it; therefore, when in any material points of management they were ready to come to a rupture, I found it advisable to think neither of them absolutely in the wrong; but by giving to one as much of the right of his opinion in this way as I took from the other in that, their differences were sometimes softened into concessions that I have reason to think prevented many ill consequences in our affairs that otherwise might have attended them. However, he continues, 'there were some points in which we were always unanimous. In the twenty years, while we were our own directors, we never had a creditor that had occasion to come twice for his bill; every Monday morning discharged us of all demands before we took a shilling for our own use. And from this time we neither asked any actor, nor were desired by them, to sign any written agreement (to the best of my memory) whatsoever. The rate of their respective salaries were only entered in our daily pay-roll; which plain record everyone looked upon as good as city security.' The very diversity of taste in the three managers prevented them jarring. Dogget's passion was money. Wilks's ambition was entirely absorbed in the stage. Cibber desired to be a rake and a man of fashion, was a member of White's, and was always to be seen in the company of lords.

Cibber had a prejudice against Elrington, afterwards a

very fine actor, and would not advance him. A nobleman undertook to plead his cause, and solicit for him a certain part he had a great desire to play. ‘My lord,’ answered Cibber, ‘it is not with us as with you ; your lordship is sensible that there is no difficulty in filling places at Court ; you cannot be at a loss for persons to act their part there. But I assure you it is quite otherwise in our theatrical world : if we should invest people with characters who are incapable to support them we should be undone.’ Cibber had a great passion for the gaming-table, and frequently lost heavily, this, and his gay style of living, often interfered with his professional duties, and sometimes he would go upon the stage imperfect in his oldest parts. Davies had seen him lose himself in Sir Courtly Nice, and supply the deficiencies of memory by an elaborate bow, a long-drawled-out ‘Your servant, madam.’ Then, deliberately inhaling a pinch of snuff, he would strut across the stage, and whisper to the prompter, ‘What is next?’

In ‘The Laureat,’ published during a quarrel between him and Wilks, he is accused of envy, idleness, neglect, and tyrannical behaviour to inferiors. ‘Did you not,’ says the writer, ‘hurt the theatrical affairs by your avarice and ill-conduct? Did you not by your general misbehaviour towards authors and actors bring an odium on your brother managers as well as yourself? I have been assured no person who ever had any power on the stage was ever so universally odious to the actors as yourself.’ He was particularly merciless to young authors. He called it ‘the choking of singing birds.’ There is a story told of Fenton bringing him ‘Mariamne’ to read. He knocked at the great man’s door, and scarcely venturing to step beyond the threshold, placed a roll of manuscript in his hand, asking him to read it and give his opinion. Colley turned over the first leaf, read two lines, then gave it back to him with an ‘It won’t do, sir ;’ and went away to a coffee-house to tell the anecdote and laugh over the unfor-

tunate man's discomfiture. But in justice it must be added that we have no record of any other work of real merit being rejected. Here is an amusing picture, from 'The Laureat,' of Cibber presiding in judgment upon new plays :

'The court sitting, Chancellor Cibber (for the other two, Wilks and Dogget, like Masters in Chancery, sat only for form-sake, and did not presume to judge) nodded to the author to open his manuscript. The author begins to read, in which, if he failed to please the corrector, he would sometimes condescend to read it for him. If the play struck him warmly, as it would if he found anything new in it, and he thought he could particularly shine as an actor, he would then lay down his pipe (for the Chancellor always smoked when he made a decree), and cry, "By G—— there is something in this! I do not know but it may do; I will play such a part." When the reading was finished, he sometimes made his proper corrections, and sometimes without any propriety.' Upon all sides we hear of his envious disposition. Gildon says : 'He is always repining at the success of others, and upon the stage is always making his fellow-actors uneasy.' Such a disposition, in that pugnacious age, it might be supposed, would get him into serious scrapes, but with Colley discretion was the better part of valour. 'Of all the comedians who have appeared upon the stage in my memory,' writes Chesterfield in 'Common Sense,' 'no one has taken a kicking with such humour as our excellent Laureate.'

In 1713, an important change took place in the triumvirate, by the secession of one of its members and the admission of another, which brings us to Betterton's celebrated successor in tragedy.

BARTON BOOTH was a gentleman by birth, and related to the Earls of Warrington, whose family name he bore. He was intended for the church, but when a boy at Westminster won such applause as Pamphilus in Terence's 'Andria,' that from that time his thoughts were turned from the pulpit to the stage. At seventeen he ran away from home, joined a

strolling company in the eastern counties, and even played at Bartholomew Fair; then he contrived to obtain an appearance at Dublin, and performed Oronooko, under difficulties. On the first night, the weather being warm, forgetful of his black face he wiped off the perspiration, and appeared in the last act like a half-washed chimney-sweep, amidst roars of laughter. The next, a lady fixed some crape over his features; but, in the energy of acting, a part of it slipped off, so that he looked like a magpie. ‘When I came off,’ he said, ‘they so lampblacked me for the rest of the night that I was flayed before it could be got off again.’ Upon returning to London in 1701, he too, like Wilks, made his appeal to the great father of the stage, Betterton, armed with a letter of introduction from Lord Fitzhardinge. It would appear that the old actor gave him lessons, and he made his *début* in the same year at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, in Rochester’s play of ‘Valentinian,’ with his tutor and Mrs. Barry. Even beside those grand artists he created an excellent impression. Cibber tells us that Booth confessed to him he ‘had been for some time too frank a lover of the bottle, but having had the happiness to observe into what contempt and distress Powel had plunged himself by the same vice, he was so struck by the terror of his example that he fixed a resolution (which from that time to the end of his days he strictly observed) of utterly reforming it.’ One of his early successes was the Ghost to Betterton’s Hamlet, in which he was so solemn, so pathetic, and so majestic that he almost shared the honours with the great master. ‘The Ghost,’ says Davies, ‘though not meanly represented since the time of Booth, has never been equal to the action of that comedian. His slow, solemn, and undertone of voice, his noiseless tread, as if he had been composed of air, and his whole deportment, inspired the audience with that feeling which is excited by awful astonishment! The impression of his appearance in this part was so powerful upon a constant frequenter of the theatres for

nearly sixty years, that he assured me, when long after Booth's death he was present at the tragedy of "Hamlet," as soon as the name of the Ghost was announced on the stage he felt a kind of awe and terror, "of which," said he, "I was soon cured by his appearance."

But while the great actor of the Restoration survived, even with failing powers, all others remained second in public estimation, and it was not until the production, in 1712, of Ambrose Philips's 'Distressed Mother,' an adaptation of Racine's 'Andromaque,' that Booth, in the character of Pyrrhus, rose to the first rank of his profession. In the next year a greater triumph awaited him in Addison's 'Cato.' It would seem that the managers did not fully perceive the capabilities of this part; Wilks was even doubtful that Booth, being a young man, would consent to appear as so venerable a personage, and took the part himself to his lodgings, to meet any objections he might make, and persuade and coax him into accepting it. But a very casual glance at the manuscript revealed to our tragedian what a grand chance was within his grasp. He kept the knowledge to himself, however, was cold and indifferent over the matter, and pretended that he took the part simply to oblige. The play had been much talked about, and on the first night the house was crowded with all the greatest men of the Whig and Tory party. The pompous declamations on liberty were applauded to the echo by both sides, each appropriating those sentiments to its own views. It was its peculiar political significance that rendered this cold, turgid play, so destitute of all human passion and reality, a success; but we must not forget Booth's acting. His delineation of the noble Roman must, indeed, have been a magnificent performance, although of a style that would scarcely be acceptable now. Lord Bolingbroke was so delighted with it, that on the first night he presented him with one hundred guineas, from himself and the gentlemen who were with him in his box.

This gift led to another of equal value, for Dogget, who, as it has been before said, was a furious Whig, was so annoyed at this Tory presentation that he prevailed with his colleagues to bestow upon our tragedian a similar sum out of the treasury, because he could not bear that so redoubted a champion of liberty as Cato should be bought off to the cause of an opposite party. For thirty-five nights ‘Cato’ crammed Drury Lane to the ceiling. At the end of the season the company went to Oxford, as was a frequent custom. ‘On the first day of our acting it,’ says Cibber, ‘our house was in a manner invested, and entrance demanded at twelve o’clock at noon, and before one it was not wide enough for many, who came too late for places. The same crowds continued for three days together.’ That year the three managers cleared £1,500 each.

It was now suggested by Bolingbroke that the actor who had made a success unequalled since the days of Betterton, should be admitted to a share of the patent. Dogget violently opposed the proposition, both upon political and commercial grounds ; he could no more endure the thought of yielding to the dictation of a Tory lord than he could of admitting another to be a sharer in his gains. Wilks and Cibber were equally averse to a further division of profits, and had besides an old grudge against the proposed partner, for when they, with other actors, quitted Drury Lane and went over to the Haymarket, Booth, who was then only a tyro, chose to remain with Rich. ‘This,’ says Cibber, ‘his separation from our interests, when our all was at stake, afterwards kept his advancement to a share with us, in our more successful days, longer postponed than otherwise it might probably have been.’ He lays the blame of this conduct, however, upon Wilks, who, he says, was jealous of the rising actor, and Booth thought he would make greater advancement if he were out of his company.

To keep Booth fully employed, and to prevent him meeting his aristocratic friends, especially Bolingbroke, who was

interceding with royalty in his favour, he was cast to play every evening ; but the ruse did not succeed, for each night after the performance the carriage-and-six of some lord was waiting at the stage door, to whirl him off to Windsor, where he would remain at some noble house all the next day, and be brought back by the same mode of conveyance in time for his professional duties. Two of the managers gave way at last ; but Dogget still held out, until he ultimately withdrew from the management, and was so embittered by his defeat that he commenced a lawsuit against his late partners. Booth payed £600 for his share of the stock property of the theatre ; while the Court awarded Dogget a similar sum for his interest in the establishment. After his secession, the latter appeared only once again upon the stage, for Mrs. Porter's benefit, April 1, 1718. He died at Eltham in 1721, and is buried in the parish church.

In 1719, a few years after the death of his first wife, who was the daughter of a Norfolk baronet, Booth married the celebrated dancer, MISS SANTLOW, whose beauty and poetry of motion had enslaved the hearts of half the men of the day, including the Duke of Marlborough. After marriage the lady quitted the ballet for the drama, and appeared as Dorcas Zeal in Charles Shadwell's 'Fair Quaker of Deal,' the piece with which Collier inaugurated his management of Drury Lane ; Booth being the Captain Worthy. The part admirably suited her. 'The gentle softness of her voice,' says Cibber, 'the composed innocence of her aspect, the modesty of her dress, the reserved decency of her gesture, and the simplicity of the natural sentiments that fell from her, made her seem the amiable maid she represented.' The union was a happy one, it would seem, but not of long duration, for very soon Booth's health began to give way beneath the gay life he led in the society of his aristocratic friends, and, after one or two severe attacks of illness which compelled him to relinquish his profession, he made his last bow to an audience in the year 1729. He survived his

retirement only four years, dying in 1733. He lies buried in Cowley Church, near Uxbridge, in which neighbourhood he owned an estate. Booth Street, Westminster, was built by and named after him. But for his wife's fortune he would have died a poor man. He stated in his will, that all he was then possessed of did not amount to two-thirds of the money his marriage had brought him; that remnant was entirely left to its rightful owner, to whose generous disposition he pays high tribute, by setting forth how he had bestowed £1,300 upon his sisters and £400 upon his brother, out of 'her substance' and at her earnest solicitation, which generosity had been returned, as is usual in such cases, with the basest ingratitude. Like his great master, Booth owed little to Nature, his figure being rather short, his face round and red. His range of characters was not so varied as that of Hart or Betterton, and he was undoubtedly inferior to both. Theophilus Cibber is the only one who allows him to have had any talent for comedy.

Aaron Hill, in a letter to Victor, says, 'He had learning to understand whatever it was his part to speak, and judgment to know how far it agreed or disagreed with his character.' 'His voice,' adds Victor, 'was completely harmonious, from the softness of the flute to the extent of the trumpet.' He had a very exalted idea of his profession. 'The longest life,' he said, 'is too short for the almost endless study of the actor.'

Cibber was still diligently producing plays, good or bad, of which 'The Double Gallant' and 'The Lady's Last Stake' (1707-8) were the best that appeared before the celebrated 'Nonjuror' (1718), upon which Bickerstaff afterwards founded 'The Hypocrite.' It was a clever adaption of Molière's 'Tartuffe,' applied as a satire to the Jacobite faction. The Whigs were delighted; the King sent the author two hundred pounds, and Lintot, the bookseller, gave him one hundred for the copyright. If it made him friends among the Whigs, it created him enemies among the Tories,

and confirmed that virulence which Pope manifested against him during so many years. But the hatred of the great satirist took its origin from a more personal cause. A few months previous to the appearance of ‘The Nonjuror,’ he had, conjointly with Gay, written a farce entitled ‘Three Hours after Marriage.’ The piece was damned in consequence of an extravagant situation in the last act, in which the lovers insert themselves, one into a mummy’s, the other into a crocodile’s, skin. A short time afterwards, Cibber, while playing Bayes in ‘The Rehearsal,’ made a satirical allusion to these incidents, probably because he saw Pope in front. Trembling with passion, the poet came behind the scenes, and with a torrent of abuse demanded that the allusion should not be repeated. So far from yielding, Cibber vowed he would repeat the jest every time he played the part. Thus began the famous quarrel, which culminated in the actor being made the hero of ‘The Dunciad.’ Pope did not come best out of the affray ; the moderation and dignity of Cibber’s first ‘Letter to Mr. Pope’ are admirable. He made no attempt to depreciate the genius of his foe ; on the contrary, he sincerely praised it. In his second, in which he promulgated a ludicrous and indecent story against Pope, although less commendably, he fought him with his own foul weapons, and made him writhe with agony. ‘Cibber did not obtrude himself upon the contest,’ says D’Israeli (‘Quarrels of Authors.’) ‘Had he been merely a poor vain creature, he had not preserved so long a silence. . . . He triumphed by that singular felicity of character, that inimitable *gaieté de cœur*, that honest simplicity of truth, from which flowed so warm an admiration of the genius of his adversary, and that exquisite tact in the characters of men which carried down this child of airy humour to the verge of his nineteenth year, with all the enjoyment of strong animal spirits, and all that innocent egotism which became frequently a source of his own raillery.’

In 1728 Cibber completed and produced Vanbrugh’s

posthumous and unfinished comedy ‘A Journey to London,’ under the title of ‘The Provoked Husband.’ A hostile audience assembled on the first night to hiss Cibber’s portion of the work, and applaud Sir John’s, never doubting their ability to detect which was which. But what was intended to be a bitter mortification proved an immense triumph. He afterwards printed Vanbrugh’s fragment, and showed his enemies that the scenes which they had loudly applauded were his, notably the fine one in the last act, the reconciliation between Lord and Lady Townley, while those of the Wronghead family, which they had so violently condemned, were the work of his *collaborateur*. ‘The Provoked Husband’ is an admirable work, which kept the stage until within the last thirty years, and, notwithstanding Leigh Hunt’s opinion to the contrary. Some of the best writing in it is decidedly Cibber’s. It was in 1730 that the office of Poet Laureate was bestowed upon him, on what grounds must ever remain an impenetrable mystery. ‘As an actor,’ says a contemporary, ‘he had undoubted merits; as a dramatic writer his character was both good and bad; as Laureate he was unquestionably the worst that ever was.’ His verses, which appeared year after year in the magazines, were turned into ridicule, and were the amusement of the town. He would sit in an obscure corner at the coffee-houses, listen to the abuse heaped upon them, and frequently join in the laugh. Whether he really set no value upon his poetry, or whether he put on a cheerful countenance only to disarm and mortify malice, cannot be known.

One by one the actors of his youth dropped off, and in 1733 he sold his share of the patent and retired from the stage. Yet he continued for several years to appear at intervals in his favourite parts, and the estimation in which he was held is proved by the fact that he was paid fifty guineas for each of these performances. In 1745 he produced his last dramatic work, ‘Papal Tyranny,’ an alteration of Shakespeare’s ‘King John,’ *à propos* of the Scotch Rebel-

lion. It provoked a storm of disapprobation. He himself played Pandulph, in whose mouth he placed a number of ranting speeches. ‘His pipe,’ says Davies, ‘was ever powerless, and now, through old age, so weak that his words were rendered inarticulate. The unnatural swelling of his words displeased all who preferred natural elocution to artificial cadence. . . . But Colley’s deportment was, I think, as disgusting as his utterance. He affected a stately, magnificent tread, a supercilious aspect, with lofty and extravagant action, which he displayed by waving up and down a roll of parchment in his right hand; in short, his whole behaviour was so starchly studied, that it appeared eminently insignificant, and more resembling his own Lord Foppington than a dignified churchman.’ To the end he continued to be the old beau; the man about town, airy, gay, sarcastic as ever. The actors of his youth continued to be his ideals of histrionic excellence; next to those in his esteem were the performers of his maturity; but he could see no talent in the rising men and women of his old age. It was with difficulty that he could be brought to acknowledge that Garrick was ‘clever.’ He died in 1757, at his house in Islington, at the age of eighty-six, and was buried in the Danish Church, Welclose Square.\*

\* In the first edition of this book I stated that Colley Cibber died in Berkeley Square, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. A critic in the *Academy* pointing this out to be an error, I thoroughly investigated the matter, and, thanks to the Rev. Dan Greatrix, the Vicar of St. Paul’s Dock, and the courtesy of the Danish Consul, Mr. Meyers, I obtained some curious information. Caius Cibber, who was the architect of the Danish Church, had a family vault there, and when the old building was pulled down a few years back, to make room for the schools that now stand upon its site, the bodies of the old sculptor and his wife were exhumed, to be re-interred beneath the foundation of the new edifice. Mrs. Cibber was found buried in a white satin shroud and white silk stockings, the body being in a perfect state of preservation. Mr. Greatrix, who superintended the exhumation, could not remember whether the coffin of Colley Cibber was in the vault, but a reference to the tracings taken from the old tablets, which I was enabled to examine through the courtesy of Mr. Meyers, placed the fact beyond doubt, as the name of Colley Cibber and the date of his death followed those of his father and mother.

Cibber's powers as an actor lay entirely in comic characters. Dibdin, in his 'History of the Stage,' remarks : 'To him obstacles were incentives. Nature even, according to his own account, had denied him almost every theatrical requisite, yet he found a substitute for all, and made study, perfectness, and judgment arrest as much the attention of the public as others did truth, elegance, and nature. One of his most famous performances was Justice Shallow, of which Davies says : "His manner was perfectly simple, his look so vacant when he questioned his cousin Silence about the price of ewes, and lamented in the same breath, with silly surprise, the death of Old Double, that it will be impossible for any surviving spectator not to smile at the remembrance of it. The want of ideas occasions Shallow to repeat almost everything he says. Cibber's transition from asking the price of bullocks to trite but grave reflections on morality, was so natural, and attended with such an unmeaning roll of his small pig's-eyes, accompanied with such an important utterance of "tick, tick, tick," not much louder than the balance of a watch, or a pendulum, that I question if any actor was ever superior in the conception and expression of solemn misgiving." But like all great comic actors, he had a violent *penchant* for tragedy, and persisted in playing Richard—even after Garrick—Wolsey, Iago, etc. In the first, his harsh, cracked voice in the more passionate scenes excited derisive laughter ; in Wolsey, Davies says, "his pride and passion were almost farcical ;" in Iago he was once hissed off the stage. In Thomson's 'Sophonisba' he was received with such disapprobation that he was obliged to relinquish the character to another and inferior actor ; and the audience signified their appreciation of the change by giving the latter a rapturous reception.

His principal plays have been already referred to ; but one of their chief merits has yet to be mentioned ; they were among the first that, profiting by the censures of Jeremy Collier, returned to the path of decency, which had been

entirely abandoned by the licentious comic writers of the Restoration. His ‘Apology,’ from which I have largely quoted, written soon after his retirement, is the finest theatrical book in the language ; it is a complete history of the English stage during forty years, is full of shrewd and clever remarks upon the dramatic art, applicable to any period, and is as truly a text-book to the actors of the present day as it was to those of his own.

Among the tragic actors of this period we must not omit the name of GEORGE POWEL, who, although Cibber usually mentions him in contemptuous terms, wanted only sobriety and industry to have risen to be one of the finest actors of his time. He was the original ‘gallant, gay Lothario’ of ‘The Fair Penitent,’ and of many other famous heroes, between the years 1687 and 1714. But dissipation destroyed all his fine gifts. He frequently went upon the stage in a state of intoxication ; he was so hunted by sheriff’s officers that he used to walk through the streets with his sword in his hand, and whenever he saw one of those gentry approaching would roar out, ‘Get on the other side of the way, you dog.’ To which the other, knowing his man and what he might expect if he attempted an arrest, would reply humbly, ‘We don’t want you now, Mr. Powel.’ In an advertisement in the *Tatler*, he is called ‘haughty George Powel.’

A promising young actor, who might have done great things, was Hildebrand Horden, the son of Dr. Horden, minister of Twickenham ; he was killed in 1697, in a brawl at the Rose Tavern, with one Colonel Burgess, who was arraigned for the murder, but acquitted. ‘This young man,’ says Cibber, ‘had almost every natural gift that could promise an excellent actor.’ He was much sought after in society ; his handsome person rendered him a great favourite among the ladies, and for two or three days together, while he lay dead, several came in their carriages to see him in his shroud. But for his death Wilks might not have been sent for from Dublin.’

Among the comic actors of this time, there were few greater favourites than Norris, better known as JUBILEE DICKEY, from a part in which he made himself famous, in Farquhar's 'Constant Couple.' He had a little formal figure, and a voice so singular that it was said that if he came into a coffee-house and only called 'Waiter!' the gravest person could not forbear smiling. A contemporary of his was the renowned JOE MILLER, who, it is said, could neither read nor write, and was consequently obliged to take to himself a wife to have his parts read to him. Peake, in his 'Life of Colman,' but without giving his authority, states that 'although a good actor, he was so excessively dull and stupid that it was considered a capital jest to impute all the good stories and witty sayings to him.' The book of jokes that goes by his name is supposed to have been the compilation of John Motley, the dramatist, who lived in his time. There was an epitaph upon the tombstone, however, which was erected over his grave in the old green yard in Lincoln's Inn, that highly praises his wit and good fellowship.

Amongst the actresses precedence must be given to Mrs. Bracegirdle's successor, beautiful ANNE OLDFIELD. Her father had been an officer in the Guards under James II. She was living with her aunt, who kept the Mitre Tavern in St. James's Market, when one day Farquhar, who frequented the house, overheard her reading behind the bar, Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Scornful Lady,' and was so struck by the propriety of her emphasis, the happy manner in which she distinguished each personage, the animation of her countenance, and the beauty of her face and figure, that he obtruded himself upon the family party to heartily applaud, and tell her what an admirable actress she would make. The next time Vanbrugh came to the house her mother told him what Farquhar had said, and he gave her an introduction to Rich, who, upon this recommendation, engaged her at 15s. a week. This was in 1699, when she was not more than sixteen years of age. 'She remained,' says Cibber, 'about a twelvemonth

almost a mute, and unheeded, till Sir John Vanbrugh gave her the part of Alinda in "The Pilgrim." But the old critic confesses he could see nothing in her at this time, beyond a pleasing person and a silvery-toned voice, and that he considered her mode of speaking formal, plain, and flat. In 1703, when Mrs. Mountfort (then Mrs. Verbruggen) died, there was a struggle for her parts. One, Leonora, in 'Sir Courtly Nice,' fell to Mrs. Oldfield. Cibber, who played the hero, was so displeased with the cast that it was with difficulty she could prevail upon him to rehearse his scenes with her. 'However,' he says, 'we ran them over, with a mutual inadvertency of one another. I seemed careless, as concluding that any assistance I could give her would be to little or no purpose; and she muttered out her words in a sort of misty manner, at my low opinion of her. When the play came to be acted, she had just occasion to triumph over the error of my judgment, by the almost amazement that her unexpected performance awaked me to; so forward and sudden a step into nature I had never seen; and what made her performance more valuable was, that I knew it all proceeded from her own understanding, untaught, unassisted by any more experienced actor. . . . Upon this unexpected sally, then, of the power and disposition of so unforeseen an actress, it was, that I again took up the two first acts of "The Careless Husband," which I had written the summer before, and had thrown aside in despair of having justice done to the character of Lady Betty Modish by any woman then among us.' The comedy was produced in 1704, and the public heartily endorsed Cibber's judgment. So perfect a woman of fashion had never yet been seen upon the stage, and the author attributes the success of the play chiefly to her consummate acting. 'After her success in this character of high life,' he says, 'all that Nature had given her of the actress seemed to have risen to its full perfection; but the variety of her power could not be known till she was seen in as great variety of characters; which as fast as they fell to

her, she excelled in. I have often seen her,' he adds, 'in private societies, where women of the best rank might have borrowed some part of her behaviour, without the least diminution of their sense or dignity. In the wearing of her person she was particularly fortunate; her figure was always improving to her thirty-sixth year; but her excellence in acting was never at a stand; and the last new character she shone in (*Lady Townley*) was a proof that she was still able to do more, if more could have been done for her.' Her last original part was Thomson's *Sophonisba*, and the poet said, 'She excelled what even in the fondness of an author I could wish or imagine.'

At one time she believed herself unsit for tragedy. Yet in several tragic parts, especially in *Calista*, she is said to have been imitable. She was the original Jane Shore (1714). 'Her excellent clear voice of passion,' writes Chetwood, in his '*History of the Stage*,' 'her piercing, flaming eye, with manner and action suiting, used to make me shrink with awe.'

Although by no means an immaculate person, Mrs. Oldfield was received on terms of intimacy by ladies in the best society. She kept house with a gentleman named Maynwaring, until his death, after which she accepted the same position to General Churchill, and by the world was regarded almost in the light of an honest wife, which she was in all but name. 'It was never known,' says Chetwood, 'that she troubled the repose of any lady's lawful claim; and was far more constant than millions in the conjugal noose.' 'I hear you and the General are married,' said Queen Caroline to her one day. 'Madam,' she replied, 'the General keeps his own secrets.' Those who have read the life of the unhappy Richard Savage will remember that it was Mrs. Oldfield who rescued him from destitution and despair by settling fifty pounds a year upon him during her life-time. She died in 1703. 'As the nicety of dress was her delight when living,' says a biographer, 'she was as

nicely dressed after her decease, being, by Mrs. Saunders' direction, thus laid in her coffin; she had on a *very fine Brussels lace head*; a Holland shift, with tucker and double ruffles of the same lace; a pair of new kid gloves, and her body wrapped up in a winding-sheet.' Pope has satirised this description in his 'Moral Essays.\* She was laid in state in the Jerusalem Chamber, nobles supported her pall, and she is buried in the cloisters of Westminster. Her children married into the houses of Cadogan and Anglesea, and the Lords Clarence and Alfred Paget are her great-great-grandchildren.

The height to which rivalry was carried by the actresses of those days is exemplified in a story told of MRS. ROGERS, who was so enraged at the part of Andromache, in Philips's 'Distressed Mother,' being given to Mrs. Oldfield, that she incited a body of her admirers to raise a riot in the theatre on the first night of its performance, which was carried to such formidable lengths that a guard had to be sent for before it could be suppressed. Mrs. Rogers was very handsome, and notorious for her prudery; but Wilks was so desperately in love with her that he swore he would kill himself before her eyes if she did not return his passion. Her prudery stopping at homicide, she yielded. Some time afterwards, during a quarrel, she reproached him with this weakness, exclaiming 'Ah, villain! did I not save your life!'

As Mrs. Oldfield was the successor of Mrs. Bracegirdle, so did Mrs. Barry's mantle fall upon the shoulders of MRS. PORTER, who had been in the habit of playing secondary parts to her, and had studied her style of acting. Betterton saw her act as a child the genius of Britain, in a Lord

\* "Odious! in woollen! 'twould a saint provoke,"  
(Were the last words that poor Narcissa spoke)-  
"No, let a charming chintz and Brussels lace  
Wrap my cold limbs and shade my lifeless face.  
One would not sure be frightful when one's dead—  
And, Betty, give this cheek a little red."

Mayor's pageant in the reign of Charles, or James II., and took her under his tuition. She was so small at the time that he used to threaten if she did not do as he told her, he would put her into a fruit-woman's basket who stood in the pit, and cover her with a vine-leaf. Very little is known of her private life, but she was always a welcome guest among the best and most respectable families of London. She lived at Heywood Hill, near Hendon. One summer's night, in 1731, she was stopped in her chaise by a highwayman. With all the courage of a stage heroine, her answer to his demand for money was to present a pistol, of which she always carried a brace, at his head. Upon which the man assured her that necessity, and not choice, made him a thief, to relieve the wants of a starving family. His piteous story so moved her that she voluntarily handed him her purse. When he rode away, being very excited by the encounter, she gave her horse a sharp cut with the whip, he started forward, threw her out of the carriage, and in falling she dislocated her thigh. Yet, notwithstanding his being the cause of this accident, which lamed her for the rest of her life, she made it her business to inquire into the truth of the fellow's assertions, and upon finding them to be correct, raised £60 for him among her friends.

In person she was tall, well-shaped, with fair hair and complexion, but not handsome. Her voice was naturally harsh and unpleasing with a disagreeable tremor, to overcome the effect of which she spoke with a kind of modulated cadence, that, together with a lack of vivacity, rendered her unsuccessful in comedy. But her dignified deportment, her graceful ease, her passion and enthusiasm, render her a tragedy queen *par excellence*. Cibber is wholly silent upon her abilities, but Davies tells us 'that there was an elevated consequence in the manner of that actress which since her time I have in vain sought for in her successors. The dignity and grace of a queen were never, perhaps, more

happily set off than by Mrs. Porter.' Dr. Johnson told Mrs. Siddons that in the vehemence of tragic rage he had never seen her equalled. She was especially fine in regal characters—as Queen Katherine, and as Queen Elizabeth, in '*The Unhappy Favourite.*' One night, when she was playing the latter part, Queen Anne, who was seated in a stage box, dropped her fan upon the stage. Thoroughly possessed by the character she was representing, Mrs. Porter pointed to it, and, addressing one of her attendants in a tone of imperial dignity, said, 'Take up our sister's fan.' Her Majesty smiled good-humouredly, and there was a loud burst of applause from the audience, while the actress, aroused by these sounds to the reality of the situation, stood overwhelmed with confusion at her temerity. Her first appearance in London, according to Geneste, was at Lincoln's Inn Fields, in 1699; and her last appearance was at Covent Garden in the season of 1741-2. She was the original Araminta in the '*Confederacy,*' Hermione in '*The Distressed Mother,*' Alicia in '*Jane Shore,*' Leonora in '*The Revenge,*' etc. Pecuniarily Mrs. Porter was not among the fortunate ones, and seems to have lived during her last years upon the benevolence of Lord Cornbury. She died in 1762 at a very advanced age.

LAVINIA FENTON was the original Polly Peachum of Gay's '*Beggar's Opera.*' She was the daughter of a naval lieutenant, and seems to have made an appearance at the little theatre in the Haymarket, in 1726, as Monimia, when she was scarcely fifteen years of age; but her first regular engagement was with Rich, who gave her his usual salary, for a novice, of 15*s.* a week, which, after she had rendered herself the idol of the town in Polly, when her portrait, with laudatory verses, was in every shop-window in London, he made 30*s.* ! The Duke of Bolton fell in love with her in the part, took her off the stage in 1728, and upon the death of his wife made her a duchess. Her contemporaries speak of her as beautiful and accomplished, and as adorning by her wit and

good sense the high rank to which she was raised. According to Walpole her death took place in 1760.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE INTERREGNUM.

Decline of the stage—An unfortunate manager—The first English harlequin and inventor of pantomimes—The original Captain Macbeth—Garrick's prototype of Richard III.—James Quin—The romance of his parentage—His success as Falstaff and Cato—His artificial style—His picture in the ‘Rosciad’—At Leicester House—The ‘Mrs. Quins’—His duels—The riot at Lincoln’s Inn Fields—Anecdotes of his wit and benevolence.

FROM the death of Wilks and Booth and the retirement of Cibber, until the appearance of Garrick, there was an interregnum, during which the theatre, being in the hands of unprincipled or mercenary men wholly indifferent to art, fell from the high position to which the triumvirate had raised it to the lowest depths of degradation; while the actors, destitute of original genius, were the mere echo of their great predecessors, reproducing their faults and mannerisms, their strut and pompous cadences, without those flashes of greatness which redeemed defects.

In 1732, Highmore, a gentleman of means, gave Booth £2,500 for half his share, and after her husband's death, Mrs. Booth disposed of the remainder for £1,500. While Cibber obtained only £3,000 for his whole share. Mrs. Wilks retained her interest. Thus Highmore, in partnership with Giffard, who had built the Goodman's Fields Theatre, became possessed of two-thirds of the patent. And a very bad bargain it proved to him. Taking advantage of a refusal of the management to increase the pay of the performers, Theophilus Cibber stirred up a revolt, and induced nearly

all the principals to join him in opening the little theatre in the Haymarket, leaving to Highmore the mere dregs of the company. Cibber, to his shame be it said, considering the large sum he had just pocketed from the manager, endeavoured to procure his roguish son a license, but failed. The deserters were ordered to return to Drury Lane within fourteen days, and one of them, Harper, a famous Falstaff, although a householder, was arrested under the Vagrancy Act ; the theatre was closed, and Theophilus came to grief, as he usually did. The affair was Highmore's ruin, and he was soon glad to dispose of his shares to a wild young spend-thrift of good family, named Fleetwood, who obtained five-sixths of the patent for little more than half his predecessor had paid for a moiety.

Christopher Rich died in 1714, just before the opening of the new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, and his son John succeeded him as patentee of the other house. JOHN RICH, under the name of Lun, was the first and most famous of the English harlequins, and although something resembling that style of entertainment had been attempted as early as the year 1700, he may be considered the creator of pantomimes ; 'Harlequin Executed,' produced by him in 1720, being the first regular pantomime performed in this country. The harlequin of Rich was a very different personage to the spangled nonentity of these degenerate days ; he was the hero of the piece, and his love adventures with beautiful Columbine formed the plot ; the clown was a very subordinate personage until the Grimaldi time. So fine was Rich's acting in dumb show, that he could draw as many tears as the most eloquent tragedian. He was an illiterate eccentric man, who could not utter a line upon the stage, yet believed that every success achieved in his theatre was owing to his instructions.

WALKER was an admirable actor in juvenile tragedy and comedy, so fine in Hotspur and Faulconbridge, especially in the latter, that it was long ere his successor was found.

Quin, by some extraordinary perversion of judgment, was originally cast for Macheath in Gay's 'Newgate Pastoral.' He knew he could not play it, and hearing Walker humming one of the airs at rehearsal, he begged Gay to give him the part. Walker made almost as great a success as the dashing highwayman, as Lavinia Fenton did as Polly; but it was a fatal success, for his society was so much courted in consequence, and he fell into such excesses that he died a few years afterwards.

RYAN was a tragedian who might have risen above all his contemporaries, but for a peculiarity of delivery, the consequence of a bullet-hole in his cheek, which made him 'whistle' his words. Woodward told Tate Wilkinson that Garrick borrowed some of his points in 'Richard' from this actor. He and David went one night to see Ryan in the part, prepared to ridicule the performance. 'But Garrick was astonished at what he saw working in the mind of the ungraceful, slovenly, ill-dressed figure that Ryan made; which told him more than he knew before, and caused Garrick to bring to light, as his own, that unknown excellence which in Ryan had remained unnoticed and buried.' Foote referred to this story in an occasional prologue he wrote and spoke for Ryan's farewell benefit.

'From him succeeding Richards took the clue;  
And hence the style, if not the colour drew.'

The most celebrated name of this era is JAMES QUIN. He was born in 1693, in King Street, Covent Garden. His mother had in early life been abandoned by her husband, and believing him to be dead, had married again; but by-and-by the first husband returned, claimed her, and carried her off. James was the offspring of the second marriage. The Quins were a good Irish family, but the boy's birth being illegitimate, he did not gain any advantage from them. He was educated for the law, and had chambers in the Temple, but kept company with the players until he longed to become one of them. At the death of his father,

finding himself without the means of pushing his way in his profession, he resolved to follow his inclinations for the stage. Ryan introduced him at Drury Lane, where he was engaged for the season of 1717. One night '*Tamerlane*' was announced to be played ; Mills, who was to perform *Bajazet*, was taken suddenly ill, and the management, after some persuasion, induced Quin, who had hitherto done little or nothing, to go on and read the part, an extremely difficult task for the most experienced actor ; but one which he effected with perfect success. The next season he passed over to Lincoln's Inn Fields. Rich was desirous of producing '*The Merry Wives of Windsor*', but could not find a Falstaff. Quin volunteered to undertake the part, and was contemptuously snubbed for his pains. 'You attempt Falstaff?' cried Rich. 'You might as well think of acting *Cato* after *Booth*. It is quite out of your walk, young man. Nobody has any idea of the part except myself. Never think of Falstaff.' But the young man did think of Falstaff, and played it in 1720, and became the greatest after Betterton--so great that no man has ever yet succeeded to his mantle.

'Quin,' says Tate Wilkinson, 'with a bottle of claret and a full house, the instant he was on the stage was Sir John Falstaff himself. His comely countenance, his expressive eye, his happy swell of voice and natural importance of deportment, all united to make up a most characteristic piece of acting ; and when detected in the lie, there was such a glow of feature and expression as will never be equalled.' 'I can only recommend a man who wants to see a character perfectly played,' said Foote, 'to see Mr. Quin in the part of Falstaff ; and if he does not express a desire of spending an evening with that merry mortal, why I would not spend one with *him*, if he would pay my reckoning.' Davies is somewhat colder in his praise. 'Of this large compound of lies, bragging, and exhaustless fund of wit and humour, Quin possessed the ostensible or mechanical part in an eminent degree. In person he was tall and bulky, his

voice strong and pleasing, his countenance manly, and his eye piercing and expressive. In scenes where satire and sarcasm were poignant he greatly excelled, particularly in the witty triumph over Bardolph's carbuncles, and the foolery of the hostess. In the whole part he was animated, though not equally happy. His supercilious look, in spite of assumed gaiety, sometimes unmasked the surliness of his disposition ; however, he was, notwithstanding some faults, esteemed the most intelligent and judicious Falstaff since the days of Betterton.'

His manner of delivery was illustrated in 'The Fair Penitent,' where after Garrick, full of fire and impetuosity, had hurled his challenge at the head of Horatio, instead of taking it up with equal fierceness, Quin made a long pause—until one night a fellow in the gallery called out, 'Why don't you give the gentleman an answer'—then dragged out in a sepulchral voice, 'I'll—meet—thee—there.'

Davies says again, 'He was utterly unqualified for the striking and vigorous characters of tragedy.' Churchill, in the 'Rosciad,' gives a masterly picture of this actor :

His eyes, in gloomy socket taught to roll,  
Proclaim'd the sullen "habit of his soul,"  
Heavy and phlegmatic he trod the stage,  
Too proud for tenderness, too dull for rage.  
When Hector's lovely widow shines in tears,  
Or Rowe's gay rake dependent virtue jeers,  
With the same cast of features he is seen,  
To chide the libertine, and court the queen.  
From the tame scene which without passion flows,  
With just desert his reputation rose ;  
Nor less he pleased, when on some surly plan,  
He was at once the actor and the man,  
In Brute he shone unequall'd : all agree  
Garrick's not half so great a Brute as he.

\* \* \* \* \*

In whate'er cast his character was laid,  
Self still, like oil upon the surface, play'd.  
Nature, in spite of all his skill, crept in ;  
Horatio, Dorax, Falstaff—still 'twas Quin.'

Frederick Prince of Wales appointed him to instruct his children in elocution, and under his direction there were

amateur performances at Leicester House, in which the young princes and princesses took part. When told how well George III. delivered his first speech from the throne, he exclaimed proudly, ‘Ah, it was I who taught the boy to speak.’ And the King did not forget his old master, for he placed him on the civil list. For twenty years Quin was the despot of the stage. His word was law, and John Rich and every actor trembled before him. By this time the Lincoln’s Inn Fields Theatre was finally abandoned, and a new one was erected in Covent Garden, on the same spot on which the present building now stands. It was opened on the 7th of December, 1732, under the united patents of Killigrew and Davenant, John Rich being the manager.

After Booth’s death, Quin had no rival more formidable than Delane, and alternately at old Drury and Covent Garden, continued to be the great actor of his day, until ‘little Davy’ burst upon the town. Then began the battle between the old and the new school, terminating in the defeat of the former. But the old actor came very well out of the fray, for in one year Rich paid him £1,000, the largest annual sum which had, until then, ever been given to any performer. In 1748, he retired to Bath in high dudgeon. ‘I am at Bath.—Yours, James Quin,’ he wrote to Rich. To which the other replied with like Spartan brevity: ‘Stay there and be d——d.—Yours, John Rich.’ His last appearance, as a regular actor, was on the 20th of May, 1751, as Horatio in the ‘Fair Penitent.’ But he returned to the stage in 1753 to play Falstaff, for the benefit of his old friend and companion, Ryan, as he had been in the habit of doing for several years. The gentry and nobility of Bath gave him one hundred guineas, and desired him to send them down tickets to that amount. He had accumulated a very respectable fortune, half of which he sank with the Duke of Bedford, and lived upon £200 a year. He continued to be honoured and respected in the best society of Bath and London, and was a welcome guest at more than

one ducal house. He was also a frequent visitor at Garrick's villa at Hampton. The two rivals had become friends, and Davy used to call him his butler, and send him into the cellar to hunt out bottles of choice wine, an errand very much to his taste. He died in 1765, was buried in the Abbey Church, Bath, and Garrick wrote his epitaph.

His appearance was so distinguished, that at Court, it was said, he would have been taken for nothing less than a prime minister or an ambassador. His habits were eccentric. In his holidays he would make an expedition into the country in company with some lady, who became Mrs. Quin for the nonce ; when his money was nearly all spent he would return to London, give a farewell supper at the Bedford, make the lady a present, and then address her something in this fashion, ‘Madam, for our mutual convenience I have given you the name of Quin for this some time past. There is no reason for carrying on this farce here, and now, madam, give me leave to un-Quin you, and restore you to your own name for the future.’

He was famous not only as an actor, but as an epicure, humourist, duellist, and man of benevolence. Two of his duels ended fatally. The first took place at the very commencement of his career : there was a quarrel about stage business between him and an actor named Bowen ; the latter proposed that they should adjourn to a tavern and fight it out. Taking a private room, Bowen locked the door, and drew upon his companion with great ferocity ; Quin simply stood upon his defence, but the other, pressing forward in hot haste, ran upon his sword and was mortally wounded. Quin was arrested, but the dying man, taking the blame entirely upon himself, procured his acquittal. His second affair of honour was with a choleric little Welsh actor named Williams, whose pronunciation of Cato, which he called Keeto, in the message ‘Cæsar sends health to Cato,’ drew forth from the tragedian the remark, ‘Would he had sent a better messenger !’ Williams was furious, and demanded

satisfaction ; Quin laughed at him ; but after the play the irate Celt lay in wait for him under the Covent Garden Piazza, insisted upon his fighting, and after a few passes Williams lay a corpse upon the pavement. Quin was again arrested and again acquitted of blame. His third encounter was with Theophilus Cibber, in the same place, which was almost as notorious for such affairs as Hyde Park or the fields behind Montague House. He was as ready with his sword to resent an insult, or an injury, as any young hot-blooded noble. One night, in 1721, a certain profligate Earl, during the performance of ‘*Macbeth*,’ deliberately crossed the stage in the murder scene to speak to a friend upon the opposite side. Very much enraged, Rich told him he should never be admitted behind the scenes again. My lord’s answer was a blow in the face, which Rich instantly returned. In a moment the house was up in arms, the Earl’s companions drew their swords and attacked the manager ; Quin, Walker, and Ryan ran to his assistance, and used their weapons so doughtily that their lordships were driven off the stage and out of the house. But they soon returned by the front entrance, and after smashing all within their reach would have fired the building, had not Quin again come to the rescue, and, assisted by the constables, captured some of the ringleaders and dragged them off before the magistrates. Thereafter a guard of twelve soldiers and a sergeant was ordered to do duty at Lincoln’s Inn as at Drury Lane.\*

No man loved good eating and drinking better than James Quin. He once wished himself a mouth as large as the centre arch of Westminster Bridge, and that the river ran claret. Claret and John Dorys were his especial weaknesses. His first care in the morning was to send into the market

\* It is stated in ‘*Their Majesties’ Servants*’ that this was the first time a guard was commanded to attend the theatres. This is an error, for in an order issued by Charles II. in 1665, it is required of ‘*the guards attending there, and all whom it may concern, to see obedience done.*’

for a supply of that fish ; if there was not any to be had he would turn round on his pillow, with, ‘Call me to-morrow morning.’ The following *jeu d'esprit* humorously hits off these tastes :

*A Soliloquy by Mr. Quin, upon seeing the body of Duke Humphry, at the Cathedral of St. Albans.*

‘A plague of Egypt’s Arts I say ;  
Embalm the dead ! on senseless clay  
Rich wines and spices waste ;  
Like sturgeon, or like brawn, shall I  
Bound in a precious pickle lie,  
Which I can never taste ?  
Let me embalm this flesh of mine  
With turtle fat and Bordeaux wine,  
And spoil the Egyptian trade !  
Than good Duke Humphry, happier I,  
Embalm’d alive ; old Quin shall die,  
A mummy ready made.’

He had a great dislike to angling, regarding it as cruel sport. ‘Suppose now,’ he would say, ‘a being who was as much my superior as I am to these poor fish were to say, “This is a fine evening, I’ll go a Quining.” If he were to bait with a haunch of venison I should gorge. And how should I like to be dragged from Richmond to Kingston, floundering and flouncing with a hook in my gullet ?

The humorous and caustic speeches attributed to him would fill a jest-book. Garrick’s small stature was an inexhaustible subject for the jokes of his rivals. One very wet night, he and Quin were at a tavern together. Two chairs were sent for, but only one could be found. ‘Never mind,’ cried Quin, ‘we can both go in the one.’ ‘How?’ demanded Davy. ‘Nothing easier—I’ll go in the chair, and you, Davy, shall go in the lantern.’ At a dinner one day, a nobleman, not celebrated for his intellect, remarked, ‘What a pity it is, Quin, my boy, that a clever fellow like you should be a player !’ ‘What would your lordship have me—a *lord*?’ he retorted contemptuously. One night he had to make an apology for a favourite dancer, and was greatly disgusted at

the audience being out of humour at such a disappointment. ‘Ladies and gentlemen,’ he began, very brusquely, ‘Madame Roland has put her ankle out——’ Here a murmur interrupted him, at which he added savagely, ‘I wish she had put her neck out, and be d——d to her.’ A young student who desired to go upon the stage, offered to recite Hamlet’s soliloquy, to give an idea of his capabilities ; but he had not got beyond ‘To be, or not to be,’ when Quin stopped him with ‘Not to be, upon my honour.’ Quin once remarked, in the company of Warburton, that he thought the execution of Charles I. might be justified. ‘By what law?’ demanded the bishop. ‘By all the laws he had left,’ was the reply. There is a good story told against him. He was stopping at a farm-house in Somersetshire, and had turned his horse out to grass. One day he could not find it ; in his search he met a country-fellow, of whom he demanded if he had seen the animal ; the man answered he had not. ‘Have you any thieves about here?’ inquired Quin. ‘No,’ answered the yokel, with a grin ; ‘but there’s a Mr. Quin, a player from Lunnon, about here, p’raps he’s stole it.’ In his last illness the doctors were discussing how they could make him perspire, as the only means of saving his life. ‘Only send in your bills, and it’s done,’ he said.

He was rough, coarse, and caustic ; but he had a good heart. When George Anne Bellamy, whom he had treated with little ceremony until he perceived her talents, was first upon the stage, he addressed to her the following kindly speech : ‘My dear, you are vastly followed, I hear. Do not let the love of finery, or any other inducement, prevail on you to commit an indiscretion. Men in general are rascals ; if you want anything in my power that money can purchase, come to me and say, “James Quin, give me such a thing,” and my purse shall be at your service.’ An obscure actor had been discharged, and was reduced to a state of destitution : Quin interceded for him, and as he was lying in bed one morning for lack of food and fire, burst into the room,

---

bringing with him a suit of clothes, of which the poor fellow stood much in need. ‘Now, Dick, how is it you are not up and at rehearsal?’ he cried. ‘It’s all right, you can go back again.’ ‘I don’t know what I shall do for a little money until treasury-day,’ said the actor, as he donned his new suit with many grateful thanks. ‘Well, I’ve done all I can,’ said Quin, bluffly; ‘as to money, you must put your hand in your own pocket for that.’ He had placed a ten-pound note there. His first introduction to Thomson, the poet, was somewhat similar. Thomson was imprisoned for debt, and having ordered a supper and half a dozen of claret at a neighbouring tavern, Quin sought his room, and they spent a very pleasant evening together. When he rose to depart, he laid a hundred-pound note upon the table, saying, ‘The pleasure I’ve had in reading your works I cannot estimate at less than a hundred pounds, and I insist on now acquitting the debt,’ and without waiting for a word, he hurried away. As it has been previously stated, his last appearance was for the benefit of Ryan. The next year the old favour was again requested, to which Quin replied, ‘I would play for you if I could, but I will not whistle Falstaff for you. I have willed you one thousand pounds; if you want money you may have it, and save my executors trouble.’

## PART III.

### *THE GARRICK PERIOD.*



#### CHAPTER I.

##### DAVID GARRICK.

His birth—Early love of acting—Education—Voyage to Lisbon—Boyhood—Samuel Johnson—His and Garrick's journey to London—David's visits to the theatre—Goes into the wine business—Foote's *mot*—The London of 1738—Garrick's first appearance in London—Goodman's Fields Theatre—The Licensing Act—Garrick as harlequin—*Début* as Richard—Copy of the playbill—His marvellous success—Quin's *mot*—Engaged for Drury Lane—Hamlet—‘Abel Drugger’—Anecdotes of his supposed meanness—Of his generosity—Mademoiselle Violette—A romance—Marriage—The rival Romeos—Garrick's home life—‘King Lear’—Sir John Brute—‘Roses and Thorns’—Declining attraction—Visit to Paris, Rome, Naples, Parma, etc.—A great sensation—‘The Sick Monkey’—Reappearance in London—Stratford Jubilee—Farewell performances—In the House of Commons—Mrs. Garrick—Anecdotes—Her death—Garrick as Author—Actor—Character—Eccentricities.

THE Garrigues, the original form of the name, were of French extraction. The grandfather of the great actor was a refugee, driven to England by the revocation of the edict of Nantes. A son of his, an officer in the English army, married the daughter of a Lichfield parson, of Irish extraction, and an offspring of this marriage was David Garrick. Thus the blood of three nationalities—French, Irish, and English—was about equally mixed in his veins. The scene of his

birth was Hereford, where his father, Captain Garrick, was then quartered ; the date, February 19, 1716. Very soon afterwards the family took up their permanent abode at Lichfield. David was educated at the Grammar School of that city, which he entered just as another future celebrity, and companion of his, Samuel Johnson, then some seven years his senior, was leaving it. Before he was eleven years of age David had organised a company of juvenile players for the performance of Farquhar's 'Recruiting Officer,' in which he acted Kite, and one of his sister's Rose. A stop, however, was about this time put to these diversions by a summons from his Uncle David, a wine merchant settled in Portugal, who proposed to take David into the business, and at eleven years old the little fellow made the voyage to Lisbon, alone. But in less than a year he was back in England, entertaining his Lichfield friends with amateur performances.

About four years afterwards his father, who had long since retired on half-pay, exchanged with a captain who had been ordered to Gibraltar. He left his wife, inconsolable at his loss, and his children at home. David, probably in virtue of his superior shrewdness and talents, for the other brothers were but poor creatures, seems to have taken his father's place, and to have managed all the family affairs ; he conducted the correspondence with the captain, made known all the little domestic wants, and arranged all money matters. These letters are now in the Forster Collection at South Kensington, and although written by a mere boy, are very bright and full of vivacity. They contain, however, a sad tale of clamorous creditors, of children almost in rags, and of all the shifts and mortifications of genteel poverty. Such memories made David a thrifty man in after-years ; they bitterly taught him the value of money, and engendered that love of it with which he was sometimes reproached.

The bright-eyed and bright-witted boy was a welcome guest at all the best houses, and more particularly at the officers' mess. More than one colonel offered him a

cornetcy, which it was strange he did not accept—unless his mind was already bent upon the sock and buskin. When his father returned, after a four years' absence, it was thought time to decide upon a profession for him ; after some deliberation the bar was chosen, and it was determined he should at once proceed to London, and enter himself at one of the Inns of Court.

In 1736 there appeared an advertisement in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, setting forth that Samuel Johnson boarded young gentlemen and taught them the Latin and Greek languages at Edial, near Lichfield. His only pupils were David and his brother George, and a young gentleman named Offely. The academy was neither profitable nor to the master's tastes, for he was writing a tragedy, 'Irene'—which was to make his fortune and immortalise his name.\* Thereafter Garrick used to tell how he and others would watch the pedagogue, through the keyhole of his chamber door, at night, sitting by the bed composing this work, declaiming the long-winded speeches, and in his excitement tucking in the bed-clothes as though he were already in bed. Just about the same time that his pupil's lot in life was determined upon, Johnson resolved to try his fortune in London, and it was agreed that they should travel together. Garrick was to be the pupil of the Rev. John Colson, of Rochester ; his companion was recommended as a good scholar, one who might turn out 'a fine tragedy writer,' and whom, perhaps, he might assist to some literary employment. So to London they went, with, as the story goes, a horse between them, each riding and walking a stage alternately. In due time they arrived, 'I,' said Johnson one day, years

\* When David became a lessee of Drury Lane, he accepted and produced this play out of friendship for the author, and ran it nine nights in order that Johnson might make some profit by it ; but even such actors as Garrick, Barry, Mrs. Cibber, and Mrs. Pritchard could not give life to this heavy performance. Johnson was very sore at the failure of the play, and it is probable that much of his scorn for players, and of his pique against Garrick, is traceable to this circumstance.

afterwards, ‘with twopence halfpenny in my pocket, and thou, Davy, with three halfpence in thine.’ This was undoubtedly an exaggeration in David’s case—the captain would not have permitted his son to enter upon the world so scantily provided, although it might have been true in his own. While Johnson was making his round of the booksellers in search of employment, Davy was pursuing his studies under the Rev. John Colson, at Rochester, and making occasional journeys to town to visit the darling theatres, and after each visit his prospective profession became more and more unendurable to him. Little thought the actors that in a corner of the pit there sat an obscure young country lad, who was destined to sweep away the artificial school, and bring about a marvellous revolution in their art.

He had left Lichfield but a few weeks, when the sad news of his father’s death was brought to him. Soon afterwards his uncle, the Lisbon wine-merchant, who had come over to England, also died, bequeathing him £1,000. His brother Peter, who had begun life as a midshipman, sank the little money the captain had left him in a wine business, and proposed that David should join him. Anything was better to his taste than the law, so he threw away his books and exchanged the bar for the cellar. The business was to be carried on both in Lichfield and London: Peter was to conduct the country branch, David the town. The cellars were in Durham Yard, upon the site of which the Adelphi Terrace was afterwards raised. ‘He lived with three quarts of vinegar in a cellar, and called himself a wine-merchant,’ said spiteful Foote. But he really seems to have had a very respectable business, as he supplied most of the houses in the neighbourhood of Covent Garden.

But Davy could no more give his mind to wine than he could to the law. The London of 1738 was very different to the dull Temple of Mammon it has become to-day. Between St. Paul’s Cathedral and St. Martin’s Church there lay a region where business, that leaden-headed fetish of

this enlightened age, was not supremely worshipped ; and where brains, astounding as the assertion may sound to the rising generation, were esteemed more than gold ; it was the region of wits, authors, actors, books, theatres, coffee-houses, and taverns. All the wit and genius of England might have been found in the coffee-houses and taverns of Fleet Street and Covent Garden, forming a society as brilliant, and more diverse than even that of the French *salons*. But it was oligarchical ; the vulgar mob, kept within its proper bounds, as unfortunately is no longer the case, had not yet profaned every place of public resort, so as to drive the refined into the exclusive dulness of clubs. The country gentleman who spent an evening at the Bedford, or the Mitre, gathered a memory of delight for the remainder of his life ; and his less fortunate friends never wearied of listening to his descriptions of the celebrities he had seen there, and the witty things he had heard fall from their lips. Such was the society into which David Garrick, full of fire and spirit, made his way. Macklin, when speaking of this time, used to say that the stage possessed him wholly, that he could talk of nothing else but the theatre. He belonged to all the actors' clubs, and his powers of mimicry were the delight of private parties ; when an actor's merits were discussed, he would jump upon a table and give an exact imitation of him. The wine business did not flourish beneath such habits as those of the London partner, and fell into difficulties. A year after his father's death (1738) David lost his mother, who, it is said, died of pure grief for the husband on whom she doted. The last great obstacle to his wishes being removed, Garrick only required an opening. Johnson, who was then writing for the *Gentleman's Magazine*, introduced him to Cave, and an amateur performance of Fielding's 'Mock Doctor' was got up in the room over St. John's Gate, in which Garrick took a part, and made his first appearance before a London audience.

Among his theatrical friends was Giffard, the manager of the Ayliffe Street Theatre, in Goodman's Fields (built in 1732 upon the site of a silk-throwster's shop, which had been previously used for dramatic entertainments). The Licensing Bill, however, passed in 1737, strictly limited the number of metropolitan theatres to two.\* Thus the performance of stage plays at this house became illegal, and could only be accomplished by the *ruse* of issuing tickets for a concert and announcing the play as gratis. One night, during the run of a pantomime called 'Harlequin Student,' Yates, the harlequin, was taken so ill that he could not appear. Garrick, who was behind the scenes at the time, offered to take his place; the offer was accepted, and thus it was that he made his first bound upon the regular stage. It must be remembered that the harlequin of those days was not a mere jumping Jack; he was the hero of the pantomime, and had to act and sometimes to speak.† How he acquitted himself in a rôle for which his nimbleness and vivacity well suited him, is not recorded, but immediately afterwards Giffard engaged him for Ipswich, where, under the name of Lydgate, he appeared as Aboan in Southerne's 'Oroonoko,' as Chamont in Otway's 'Orphan,' and as Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's

\* It also enacted, for the first time, that all plays should be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain before they could be acted. This measure was said to have been brought about by Fielding's political squibs, 'Pasquin' and 'The Historical Register.' But it was rather the immediate effect of a play, never acted, entitled 'The Golden Rump,' which in its abuse of Ministers, and even of the King himself, so far exceeded all that had gone before, that it was considered necessary to put a decided curb upon the licentiousness of the stage. The MS. of this piece, the author of which is unknown, was sent to Giffard, who, frightened at its audacity, carried it to Walpole; the Licensing Bill was at once introduced and passed, in spite of the strong opposition of Lord Chesterfield and others. Giffard received £1,000 for his loyal conduct. The public, indignant, vigorously hissed the licensed plays. But the necessity of a dramatic censorship cannot be disputed; how poorly the public guard their own self-respect is proved by the indecencies they patronise at the present day.

† There were speaking harlequins as well as dumb ones, until after the commencement of the present century.

'Constant Couple.' All this time poor Peter was living with his three quarts of vinegar at Lichfield, in happy ignorance of his partner's doings, though a little troubled about the increasing difficulties of the firm. But the blow was coming fast. Upon his return to London, David seems to have applied for an engagement at both the patent houses, but meeting with no encouragement, he was obliged to choose a humbler scene for his appearance in the metropolis, the unlicensed theatre in Goodman's Fields, where he made his *début* on October 19, 1741.

I subjoin a verbatim copy of a portion of the bill for that night, so momentous in stage annals :

*October 19, 1741.*

At the Theatre in GOODMAN'S FIELDS, this day will be performed,  
*A Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Music*, divided into two parts.

Tickets at Three, Two, and One Shilling.

Places for the Boxes to be taken at the Fleece Tavern, near the  
Theatre.

N.B.—Between the two Parts of the Concert will be presented an Historical Play, called the

LIFE AND DEATH OF KING RICHARD THE THIRD.

Containing the distresses of Henry 6th,

The Artful Acquisition of the Crown by King Richard,  
The Murder of young King Edward 5th and his Brother in the Tower,

The Landing of the Earl of Richmond,  
And the Death of King Richard in the memorable Battle of Bosworth

Field, being the last that was fought between the houses  
of York and Lancaster, with many other true  
Historical passages.

The part of *King Richard* by A YOUNG GENTLEMAN.

(Who never appeared on any Stage.)

From his first soliloquy the audience perceived that a new light had burst upon the stage ; there was no drawl, no sing-song, no mouthing—all was natural and full of fire and passion ; some of the points electrified them ; as when he dashed away the prayer-book, after his interview with the Lord Mayor ; his 'Off with his head, so much for Buckingham' ; his marvellous tent scene ; his wild, chaotic fury in

the last act, which had always before been a piece of measured declamation ; his savage fight ; his terrible death, in which his cruel fingers seemed, in their agony, digging their own grave. No such acting lingered in any living memory. The *Daily Post* said next morning that his reception ‘ was the most extraordinary and great that was ever known on such an occasion.’ Macklin speaking of this first performance, at which he was present, says, ‘ It was amazing how, without any example, but, on the contrary, with great prejudices against him, he could throw such spirit and novelty into the part, as to convince every impartial person, on the very first impression, that he was right. In short, sir, he at once decided the public taste ; and though the players formed a cabal against him, with Quin at their head, it was a puff to thunder ; the east and west end of the town made head against them ; and the little fellow in this and about half a dozen subsequent characters, secured his own immortality.’

Assured of success he wrote at once to Peter, acquainting him with the step he had taken, and trying to make an apology out of the badness of their business, and of the fact that he could make £300 a year by his new profession, which was more than he could ever hope to draw from the wine trade. Peter, his brothers and sisters, and all Lichfield society, were of course horrified and outraged at a man sinking from the elevation of a poor tradesman to be an exponent of Shakespeare, and there were pitiful lamentations over the family disgrace. When, a little later, David had become a great man, the disgraced family were not unwilling to receive favours from this disreputable source. For a time the receipts at Goodman’s Fields did not average above £30 nightly ; but the fame of the new actor was being rapidly spread, and by-and-by came the rush. Pope was drawn from Twickenham to see this prodigy, and the sight of the little black figure in the boxes at first greatly disconcerted the young actor. ‘ That young man never had an equal, and

will never have a rival,' was the great poet's expressed opinion. And the value of that testimony is heightened by the fact that Pope was an ardent admirer of Betterton. Pitt pronounced him to be 'the only actor in England'; and Halifax, Chesterfield and Sandwich invited him to dine with them. His terms were increased from one pound a night to half the profits. Quin came to see him and called him the Whitfield of the stage, which was very appropriate; only his prophecy, that the people would soon get tired of the novelty and go back to their church, was not so happy. Soon the patent theatres, now deserted, were glad to make overtures to him, and he accepted an engagement at Drury Lane at £600 per annum for the ensuing season.

It was on the 2nd of December, 1741, that, dropping his fictitious name on the occasion of his benefit, he first appeared in the bills as David Garrick. He continued to play at Goodman's Fields until the 29th of May, in the following year. Since the previous November he had appeared in nineteen different characters—Richard, Chamont, Lothario, the Ghost (in 'Hamlet'), Aboan, Lear and Pierre, in tragedy. In comedy, amongst others, Fondlewife, Bayes, in the 'Rehearsal,' in which he gave his imitations of actors, Lord Foppington, Johnny the Schoolboy, Duretete, etc. The Rev. T. Newton writes to him: 'Mrs. Porter is no less in raptures than the rest; she has returned to town on purpose to see you, and declares she would not but have come for the world. You are born an actor, she says, and do more at your first appearance than ever anybody did with twenty years' practice. And, good God, says she, what will he be in time! And when somebody in company mentioned your not doing Lord Foppington well, she made answer, that she was sure it was impossible for you to do anything ill; you might perhaps excel less in that, but you must excel in everything.'

During the summer he played at Dublin, where his success was as prodigious as it had been in London; so great was the crowd that an epidemic, the product of heat and dirt,

broke out, which was called the Garrick fever. It was there he was given the name of Roscius. During a two months' engagement he took three benefits, and appeared as Hamlet for the first time. Partridge's immortal criticism will occur to every reader of Fielding: 'You may call me a coward if you will, but if that little man there upon the stage is not frightened, I never saw a man frightened in my life . . . Did you not yourself observe afterwards when he found out it was his father's spirit, and how he was murdered in the garden, how his fear forsook him by degrees, and he was struck dumb with sorrow, as it were, just as I should have been had it been my own case . . . He the best player! why, I could act as well as he myself. I am sure if I had seen a ghost I should have looked in the same manner, and done just as he did.' Hannah More gives us a fine description, written some years later, of his acting in this part. 'The requisites for Hamlet are not only various but opposed, in him they are all united, and, as it were, concentrated; one thing I must particularly remark, that, whether in the simulation of madness, in the sinkings of despair, in the familiarity of friendship, in the whirlwind of passion, or the meltings of tenderness, he never once forgot he was a prince; and in every variety of situation and transition of feelings, you discovered the highest polish of good breeding and courtly manners.\* To the most eloquent expression of the eye, to the handwriting of his passions on his features, to a sensibility which tears to pieces the hearts of his auditors, to powers so unparalleled, he adds a judgment of the most exquisite accuracy, the fruit of long experience and close observation, by which he preserves every gradation and transition of the passions, keeping all under the control of a just dependence and natural consistency; so naturally, indeed, do the ideas of the poet seem to mix with his own, that he seemed himself to be engaged in a succession of

\* This is a portion of the character too much neglected by many actors.

affecting situations ; not giving utterance to a speech, but to the instantaneous expression of his feelings, delivered in the most affecting tones of voice, and with gestures that belong only to nature. It was a fiction as delightful as fancy, and as touching as truth. A few nights before, I saw him in "Abel Drugger," and had I not seen him in both, I should have thought it as possible for Milton to have written "Hudibras," and Butler "Paradise Lost," as for one man to have played Haimlet and Drugger with such excellence.'

'Abel Drugger's first appearance,' says another writer, 'would disconcert the muscular economy of the wisest. His attitude, his dread of offending the doctor, his saying nothing, his gradual stealing in farther and farther, his impatience to be introduced, his joy to his friend Face, are imitable by none. When he first opens his mouth, the features of his face seem, as it were, to drop upon his tongue ; it is all caution, it is timorous, stammering and inexpressible. When he stands under the conjuror to have his features examined, his teeth, his beard, his little finger, his awkward simplicity, and his concern, mixed with hope, and fear, and joy, and avarice, and good-nature, are beyond painting.' There is a good story told of the effect he produced in this part. A Lichfield grocer had come up to London with a letter of recommendation to David from his brother Peter. Arriving in London in the evening, he went into the 2s. gallery to see the wonderful actor, of whom he had heard so much, intending to deliver his credentials next morning. But Garrick played that night 'Abel Drugger,' and so disgusted the honest grocer that he would not go near him. 'Well,' he said to Peter, on his return home, and giving him back the letter, 'though Mr. Garrick be your brother, he is one of the shabbiest, meanest, most pitiful hounds I ever saw in the whole course of my life.' The Lichfield shopkeeper was not the only person whom he disgusted in this character ; a young lady of large fortune, who had fallen so desperately in love with him in Chamont that she actually

employed a go-between to make overtures of marriage, was so disillusionised by his appearance in ‘Abel Drugger,’ that she could not again endure the thought of him.

Upon returning to London he, Macklin, and Woffington kept house together at No. 6, Bow Street, each undertaking the management for a month. The partnership did not long endure ; Peggy’s extravagances not being acceptable to careful David. It is now we begin to hear stories of his meanness and avarice, upon which Foote and so many others exercised their wit and their malice, throughout his life—and after it. ‘Peggy made the tea too strong,’ said one. Well, it is impossible for a man ever to shake off his early impressions ; in the old Lichfield time, when the captain was away in Gibraltar, the tea had doubtless to be eked out—it was an expensive article then—and the question of even a few grains was one of importance in the needy officer’s family ; David had not forgotten those days, and could not endure wastefulness—more honour to him. There is another story told of his walking up and down before his house one evening, with some person of great importance, from whom he could not break away abruptly, in perfect agony, at seeing, through the dining-room window, a thief in one of the candles guttering it down to the socket. The anecdote is given as an illustration of his meanness ; but would it not be more just to ascribe it to his horror of waste ? So thought Johnson, and no man was at times more harsh in his judgment of the player who had outstripped him on the road to fame and fortune. ‘I know,’ he said, defending him against Wilks, who said he would play Scrub all his life—‘I know that Garrick has given away more money than any man in England that I am acquainted with ; and that not from ostentatious views. Garrick was very poor when he began life ; so, when he came to have money, he probably was unskilful in giving away, and saved when he should not. But Garrick began to be liberal as soon as he could.’ The authentic anecdotes of his generosity far outnumber

those of his meanness, for which Foote's jests are the chief authority. But truth was never considered to be a necessary element of those utterances, and the man who had run through three fortunes himself was not qualified to be a judge of such matters. Once when Garrick was asked to give two guineas to a poor widow, he answered, 'No, I cannot do that.' 'Well, then, what you please,' replied the solicitant. And he gave him £30. He once lent a poor surgeon £1,000 without security, and was never repaid. Berenger, the Deputy Master of the Horse, had not sufficient income to support his position, and fell so deeply into debt that he dared not leave his house in the King's Mews, where, by privilege, he was safe from arrest. Garrick headed a subscription among his friends to buy up his bonds and notes. When this was done he gave a dinner to celebrate the event, and made a *feu-de-joie* of the papers. Among those cast upon the fire was a bond for £500 owed to himself. When Christie, the auctioneer, was reduced to great straits by the death of a gentleman who was largely indebted to him, he and a mutual friend paid a visit to Hampton, where the latter took an opportunity of acquainting Garrick with his position. Soon afterwards the host called Christie into a private room, told him what he had heard, and offered him the loan of £5,000. Foote frequently experienced his generosity, and was never refused a loan. While he was holding the 'Jubilee' up to ridicule, its author was using his best influence for him with newspaper editors and proprietors, and advancing him money to meet heavy demands. Foote was dastardly enough to ascribe these actions to fear of his pen and his mimicry. Yet when crushed beneath Jackson's and the Duchess of Kingston's prosecution he was far more pitiable than formidable, and when Garrick might have safely avenged himself for the many insults he had received, he stood by him, his firmest friend, and wrung from the bitter cynic a letter of tearful gratitude. 'God for ever bless you—may nothing but halcyon days and nights

crown the rest of your life, is the sincere prayer of Samuel Foote.' It would be impossible to strengthen such testimonies as these to his excellence of heart. He was always ready to return good for evil. Smollett was very bitter because he would not accept his unactable play of 'The Regicide,' and attacked him under the name of Marmoset, in Mr. Melopyn's story, in 'Roderick Random.' Yet Garrick afterwards accepted an indifferent farce of his, 'The Tars of Old England,' and on his benefit night charged him only £60, for the theatre, when the regular charge was £90. It might have vexed David Garrick to have tea unnecessarily strong, or to have seen 'a thief' guttering his candle, or to have uselessly squandered a halfpenny, but he could be nobly generous for all that. 'Ah, I would wish the world to believe,' writes Cumberland, 'that they take but a very short and partial estimate of that departed character who only appreciate him as the best actor in the world. He was more and better than that excellence alone could make him by a thousand estimable qualities, and much as I enjoyed his company, I have been more gratified by the emanations of his heart than by the sallies of his fancy and imagination.'

But David is not a rich man yet, and has not much to spare for generous deeds, although his poor disgraced family are very clamorous for him to do something for their children. The next important character he undertook in tragedy, Othello, was a failure. His appearance was against him, he looked insignificant in the part. George Anne Bellamy tells us that he dressed in Moorish costume, an extraordinary innovation in those days. Quin was in the pit on the first night, and when he entered exclaimed loud enough to be heard upon the stage, 'Here's Pompey, by — ! Where's the lamp and the tea-kettle?' (alluding to Hogarth's black boy). In the next season Barry came with his splendid voice and majestic figure, and drew all London to see him as the noble Moor. Upon which Garrick very wisely abandoned the part. A most disastrous

season for the theatres was the year of the Rebellion. Garrick paid a second and last visit to Dublin, and did not appear in London until the May of '46, when he played at Covent Garden for six nights, at £50 a night. It was the most critical, indeed the turning point of his career. Barry, then in his first season, was drawing crowds to Drury Lane, and now Garrick was to be pitted against Quin upon the same boards ; the two styles of acting were to be brought side by side. It was the battle of the old and the new school. The excitement out of doors was such as we cannot conceive in these *nil admirari* days. It was on the 14th of November, 1746, in Rowe's 'Fair Penitent,' the duel took place. Cumberland, then a youth, was present, and has bequeathed us a most graphic picture of the event. 'I have the spectacle even now before my eycs. Quin presented himself, on the rising of the curtain, in a green velvet coat, embroidered down the seams, an enormous full-bottomed periwig, rolled stockings, and high-heeled, square-toed shoes. With very little variation of cadence, and in a deep full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action, which had more of the senate than the stage in it, he rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference, that seemed to disdain the plaudits that were bestowed upon him, but when after long and eager expectation I saw little Garrick, then young and light, and alive in every muscle and in every feature, come bounding on the stage, and pointing at the wittol Altamont and heavy-paced Horatio—heavens, what a transition !—it seemed as if a whole century had been swept over in the transition of a single scene ; old things were done away, and a new order at once brought forward, bright and luminous, and clearly destined to dispel the barbarisms and bigotry of a tasteless age, too long attached to prejudices of custom, and superstitiously devoted to the illusions of imposing declamation. This heaven-born actor was struggling then to emancipate his audience from the slavery they were resigned to, yet in general they seemed to love darkness better

than light, and in the dialogue of altercation between Horatio and Lothario bestowed far the greater show of hands upon the master of the old school than upon the founder of the new.' After this the two rivals appeared as Falstaff and Hotspur : here Quin was the more successful, for Percy was not one of Garrick's successful parts. But in Rowe's 'Jane Shore' the tables were turned ; Quin strutted and bellowed through Glo'ster, but Garrick played Hastings superbly, and it continued to be one of his finest impersonations. And 'The Suspicious Husband' gave him an opening for such comedy acting as had not previously been witnessed in that generation.

Ere this Fleetwood had disposed of his patent to Lacy, who had been a Norwich manufacturer, but who, falling into difficulties, had joined Rich's company as an actor. Drury Lane being in the market, he found two bankers to pay down for him on mortgage £3,200 each, and for the £6,400 obtained the patent, to which, however, was tagged an annuity of £600 a year for the late manager. But Lacy was scarcely more fortunate than his predecessor, and in consequence of the failure of his two backers, Green and Amber, through a run upon their bank during the '45, he fell into debt and difficulties. In 1747 Garrick entered into partnership with him. The liabilities of the theatre were then about £12,000, towards the discharge of which Garrick found £8,000, and entered into an agreement by which he was to receive £500 a year for management, and the same for acting ; the profits, of course, to be afterwards divided between the partners. He opened his first season with the 'Merchant of Venice,' Macklin being Shylock. His company included Barry, and Macklin, the leading men (Quin had retired in disgust), Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Cibber, Mrs. Woffington, and Mrs. Clive.

The first great event of Garrick's management was the revival of Shakespeare's 'Macbeth.' 'What, haven't I been playing Shakespeare's "Macbeth"?' exclaimed Quin. In-

deed he had not, but a garbled version of Davenant's. Yet Garrick's text was far from pure; he introduced a dying speech for himself, and retained the interpolations in the witches' scenes. Macbeth was a part then little esteemed by tragedians; Garrick was the first, after the Restoration, to discover its grandeur. Actors said all its pith was exhausted in the first and second acts. Garrick smiled at such remarks, and replied that he should be very unfortunate if he could not keep alive the attention of the audience to the last syllable of so animated a character. Yet he was not altogether easy about the revival, and with his usual fear and fidgetiness, whenever he stepped beyond precedent, anticipated public censure and objections to his experiment by issuing a pamphlet, bearing the motto 'Macbeth hath murdered Garrick,' and in which he styled himself 'a certain fashionable faulty actor.' He thus, as it were, disarmed his opponents by striking the first blow at himself. But it was one of his grandest impersonations, and although he played it in a scarlet coat, gold-laced waistcoat and powdered wig, he produced an impression such as no representative of the character has since equalled. He had appeared in this tragedy in 1744, with Mrs. Giffard for his lady, but now he had the incomparable Pritchard, who fully shared the honours with him. Davies finely describes how the two played the murder scene. 'The representation of this terrible part of the play by Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard can no more be described than I believe it can be equalled. I will not separate their performances, for the merits of both were transcendent. His distraction of mind and agonising horrors were finely contrasted by her seeming apathy, tranquillity, and confidence. The beginning of the scene after the murder was conducted in terrifying whispers. Their looks and action supplied the place of words. You heard what they spoke, but you learned more from the agitation of mind displayed in their action and deportment. The poet here gives an outline of the consummate actor.—*I have done*

*the deed.—Didst thou not hear a noise?—When?—Did you not speak?*—The dark colouring, given by the actor to these abrupt speeches, makes the scene awful and tremendous to the auditors. The wonderful expression of heartfelt horror which Garrick felt when he showed his bloody hands, can only be conceived and described by those who saw him.'

Never was man more cautious of offending the conservative predilections of an English audience. When, thereafter, it was proposed to him that he should dress Macbeth in Highland costume, he answered, 'You forget the Pretender was here only thirty years ago, and, egad, I should be pelted off with orange peel.' When West, the painter, remonstrated with him on playing Horatius in a dressing-gown and periwig, instead of a toga, he replied in the same strain, 'I don't want my house pulled about my ears; Quin dressed it so, and I dare not innovate.'

It was in 1749 he married Mademoiselle Violette, the celebrated dancer. There was a mystery and a romance about this lady. She was said to be the daughter of a citizen of Vienna, named Viegel—although once in conversation she declared herself to be of noble birth. When the children of Maria Theresa were learning dancing, she, then a little girl, was taken into the palace with some others to form a class; the Empress took a fancy to her, and requested her to change her name from Viegel, which in a German *patois* means 'violet,' to the prettier French form of the word. By-and-by the Emperor, it would seem, cast his eyes upon her, upon which Maria Theresa hurried her off to England, with recommendations to several influential persons soliciting them to assist her in procuring an appearance upon the stage. She was then twenty-one years old. She came over disguised as a boy; upon her arrival was taken under the protection of Lady Burlington, and at once received in the best society. Horace Walpole, writing in 1746, says: 'The fame of the Violette increases daily; the sister Countesses of Burlington and Talbot exert all their stores of

sullen partiality in competition for her; the former visits her, and is having her picture, and carries her to Chiswick, and she sups at Lady Carlisle's, etc. She made her *début* at the Opera House, and the King honoured her with his presence.\* The daughters of her patroness used to stand at the wings at night with wraps, to throw round her, when she came off from her dance. A romantic story was invented to the effect that she was the daughter of the Earl, that he had discovered her while travelling abroad from her likeness to her mother, a lady to whom he had been devotedly attached. But Violette was not born until two years after his marriage, from which time he resided for several consecutive years entirely in England, which fact disposes of that story. Seeing Garrick play one night, she fell desperately in love with him. He was not the great man then he afterwards became, and Lady Burlington was violently opposed to the match. But they frequently met in society. 'There was an admirable scene,' writes Walpole (1749); 'Lady Burlington brought the Violette, and the Richmonds had asked Garrick, who stood ogling and sighing the whole time, while my lady kept a most fierce look-out.' They also met clandestinely. Once our hero disguised himself as a woman to hand her a letter as she passed by in her chair. The Countess privately remonstrated with him, and he promised to endeavour to cure mademoiselle of her passion. The story of Robertson's 'David Garrick,' in which he assumes drunkenness for a similar purpose, is said to be founded upon a true incident of this love-affair; but the real catastrophe was very different to the fictitious one; for the Countess, touched by the actor's generous self-sacrifice, gave her consent to the marriage. A dowry of £10,000

\* In a letter of the Earl of Strafford's occurs the following curious description of her first appearance: 'She surprised her audience at her first appearance upon the stage, for at her beginning to caper, she shewed a neat pair of black velvet breeches, with rolled stockings; but finding they were unusual in England she changes them next time for a pair of white drawers.'

was settled upon the bride, £6,000 by the Burlingtons, £4,000 by Garrick. The young pair took up their abode in Southampton Street, Strand, a fashionable neighbourhood at that time. The house is still standing, No. 27, and the little back room in which they used to breakfast is said to be little changed. It was characteristic of his love of making his most private affairs a town talk, that he played 'Much Ado About Nothing' on the night after his wedding. The allusion to Benedick, the married man, amused the audience vastly.

In 1750-51 occurred the celebrated 'Romeo and Juliet' season. This play had gone through several alterations since the Restoration: Otway, in his 'Caius Marius,' had transformed the two lovers of Verona into classical Romans; James Howard turned the play into a tragicomedy, and left them living at the fall of the curtain. In Sir William Davenant's time it was played on alternate evenings as a comedy and a tragedy, to suit different tastes. Garrick's version, in which Romeo revives after Juliet's awakening, is still adhered to in country theatres. On the 28th of September, 1750, the tragedy was produced at both houses. Barry, jealous of Garrick, and Mrs. Cibber discontented with him, had gone over to Covent Garden; Wofington and Macklin followed their example. Barry, in a prologue, insinuated that he had been driven from Drury Lane by the manager's arrogance and selfishness—he might with greater justice have applied the terms to himself. At Covent Garden Barry was the Romeo, Macklin the Mercutio, Mrs. Cibber the Juliet. At Drury Lane the parts were sustained by Garrick, Woodward, and Mrs. Bellamy. The town was divided between these rival claims. Barry's noble presence, handsome face, and silver-toned voice gave him great personal advantages; the balcony scene of this most delightful of stage lovers was unapproachable; but Garrick excelled in the scene with the Friar. 'Had I been Juliet to Garrick's Romeo,' said a lady critic, 'so impassioned was

he that I should have expected he would have come up to me. But had Barry been my lover, so seductive was he that I should certainly have jumped down to him.' Of the Juliets, Mrs. Cibber's was the more passionately pathetic; Bellamy's the more lovely, more impulsive, more natural. Barry played Romeo twelve nights, Garrick thirteen; the town was astounded at this prodigious run, and wrote epigrams upon it.

"Well, what's to-night?" says angry Ned,  
As up from bed he rouses;  
"Romeo again!" he shakes his head,  
"A plague on both your houses!"'

There is no doubt that Barry had the best of the contest, and Garrick afterwards gave the part up to him. One night after Bellamy had sighed, 'O, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?' a sailor in the gallery replied, 'Why, because Barry plays the part at the other house, to be sure.' That was the secret. It was seldom Garrick's *amour propre* was betrayed into such injudicious rivalry, and he did not repeat the mistake. Macklin meeting him one day said that in his next lecture he should settle the claims of the rival Romeos. Garrick was anxious to know how he proposed to do so. 'I mean to show your different merits in the garden scene. Barry comes into it, sir, as a great lord, swaggering about his love and talking so loud, that if we don't suppose the servants of the Capulet family almost dead with sleep, they must have come out and tossed him in a blanket. Well, sir, after having fixed my auditors' attention to this part, then I shall ask, "But how does Garrick act this?" Why, sir, sensible that the family are at enmity with him and his house, he comes creeping in upon his toes, whispering his love, and looking about him like a thief in the night.'

In his opening bill Garrick had warned the public not to expect rope-dancing and pantomimes under his management—for to such meretricious attractions had Rich and Fleetwood long resorted. But, alas! with all the dramatic talent

he had gathered around him, he found it necessary in his third season to produce a pantomime; and he made it a great success, even against Rich, who two years afterwards turned Covent Garden into a circus and menagerie, with slack-wire dancers and wild beasts. That pantomime was the first of the long list of those Christmas 'Annuals' which are still in progress at Old Drury.

In 1754 Garrick purchased a villa at Hampton, on the edge of the common. 'About it were pretty grounds, though separated by the high-road from the pleasant sward that ran down to the river's edge, where, within a year, he was building that little bit of affectation more fitted to Drury Lane than to the little country villa—the Shakespeare Temple.' Hither came the vicar, 'an old clergyman of simple tastes'—whom the player's kind interest procured something better than his Hampton living of £50 a year—to chat with Mrs. Garrick over gardening matters. 'Sir John Hawkins would drop in on his road to town, and find the owner and Mrs. Garrick eating figs in the garden. Here, too, guests found their way down to spend the day and dine, and after dinner wandered into the gardens and lounged about the grounds. To them was present the figure of their host in his dark blue coat, its button-holes bound wth gold edging, the small cocked hat also edged with lace—and the waistcoat free and open. The face and features were never at rest a moment. He would be sitting on the edge of the table, chatting on grave subjects to a doctor of law or music, when the wonderful eyes, darting to this side and that, would see the little boys of his guest scampering gaily round his garden, and he would shoot away in the midst of a sentence, join them, and be a boy himself in a second.' He loved children, although he had none of his own. During the run of the 'Jubilee' he had a nightly distribution of tarts made to the little ones who played the fairies, and used to delight in watching their enjoyment of them. Cumberland relates how he would imitate turkey-cocks, peacocks, and water-wagtails for the amusement of children.

'I always ran about his gardens,' says the younger Colman, 'where he taught me the game of trap-ball. He practised too a thousand monkey tricks upon me; he was Punch, harlequin, a cat in a gutter, then King Lear, with a mad touch that at times almost terrified me; and he had a peculiar mode of flashing the lightning of his eye, by darting it into the astonished mind of a child, as a serpent is said to fascinate a bird; which was an attribute belonging only to this theatrical Jupiter.'

In 1756 he entered into a second great rivalry with Barry, as King Lear. But this time with a different result, the victory being decidedly with Garrick. Lear was his sublimest effort in tragedy, never surpassed before, never perhaps equalled since. Davies says, 'Garrick rendered the curse so terribly affecting to the audience, that, during his utterance of it, they seemed to shrink from it as a blast of lightning. His preparation for it was extremely affecting; his throwing away his crutch, kneeling on one knee, clasping his hands together, and lifting his eyes towards heaven, presented a picture worthy of Raphael.' The mad scene was an inspiration, and in the overwhelming pathos of the last act the sobs of the audience could be plainly heard. Two epigrams, of the many passed about on the occasion are admirably suggestive of the styles of the two great actors.

'The town has found out different ways  
To praise the different Lears !  
To Barry they give loud huzzas !  
To Garrick—only tears.'

'A king—nay, every inch a king,  
Such as Barry doth appear ;  
But Garrick's quite a diff'rent thing,  
He's every inch King Lear.'

During these contests we never hear of Garrick uttering an ill-natured remark, although his rival omitted no opportunity of casting malice and detraction upon him.

The same actor who played Lear so magnificently could,

although perhaps not so well as Quin, wonderfully portray that vilest incarnation of bestial humanity, Sir John Brute, in Vanbrugh's 'Provoked Wife.' A powerful picture of his acting in the drunken scene has been bequeathed us by Lichtenberg,\* and will serve as a contrast to the sublime one just given. 'In Sir John Brute his mouth caught my attention directly he came upon the stage. I observed that he had drawn down the two angles slightly so as to give himself a most debauched and drunken look. This form of mouth he maintained to the end of the play, with the difference that the lips became somewhat more open the more intoxication increased. . . . When he comes home quite drunk, his face looks like the moon a few days before the last quarter, nearly half of it being obscured by the wig. The part which one does see is flushed and greasy, yet it is extremely friendly, and thus makes up for the loss of the other half. The waistcoat is open from top to bottom ; the stockings hang in wrinkles : the garters are loose and—very mysterious—are not a pair. It is a wonder Sir John has not picked up shoes of both sexes too. In this pickle he enters his wife's room, and to her anxious inquiry what is the matter with him, he replies, "As sound as a roach, wife." Yet he does not leave the door-post, against which he leans as heavily as if he wanted to rub his back on it. He then in turn becomes brutal, tipsily wise, and again friendly. In the scene where he falls asleep he amazed me, in which, with closed eyes, swimming head, and pallid face he quarrels with his wife, and melting his *r*'s and *l*'s into one—into a sort of dialect of medials—now abuses—now falters out scraps of morality ; then the way in which he moves his lips, so that one cannot tell whether he is chewing or tasting something, or speaking ; this as much exceeded my ex-

\* Lichtenberg was a German who wrote down his impressions of the great actors of the eighteenth century. I shall have to draw upon him several times in future chapters. I am indebted for the translation to some articles of Mr. Tom Taylor's in the 'Victoria Magazine.'

pectations as anything else I have seen this remarkable man do.' But notwithstanding these artistic triumphs, the wealth they brought him, the adulation heaped upon him, and his high social position, which admitted him as an equal into the society of the greatest of the land, there were many thorns in his bed of roses, there were sneerers and detractors to libel him in pamphlets, and sting him to the quick by jeering from the pit at his grandest efforts. One of these last was a wretched fop named Fitzpatrick, who raised a clique against him. Then there were the passions and the prejudices of the general public to contend with, which more than once broke into riots, in which the seats and chandeliers of the theatre, and even the windows of his private dwelling, were destroyed. One such disturbance occurred upon his engaging French dancers for a spectacle, called 'The Chinese Festival,' in 1756. Upon his reappearance as Archer a night or two afterwards there was a cry for him to beg pardon. But for once he would not yield to popular clamour, and, advancing to the front, he told the audience in firm yet respectful terms how ill he considered he had been treated by malicious individuals, both as regarded his property and his character; he begged to acknowledge all favours received, but unless he was that night permitted to perform his duty to the best of his ability, he was above want, superior to insult, and would never never appear on the stage again. The tumult ceased during this speech, and at the end there burst forth a grand round of applause. In 1763, the business so fell off that Garrick and Mrs. Cibber occasionally performed to £30, and even £15, and one night the total receipts amounted to only £5. Finding his power of attraction thus rapidly declining, he resolved to try the effect of absence, and at the same time endeavour to recruit his health, by no means good at the time, by travelling upon the Continent. He had made a honeymoon trip to Paris in 1750, and had been well received, but now he met with an ovation. The great French

actress, Clairon, took lessons of him ; at the *Français* he was the cynosure of every eye, every *salon* was thrown open to him, the most famous people paid him homage.

'He would sometimes favour some few friends,' says Charles Dibdin, 'but it was very rare—with what he called his "rounds." This he did by standing behind a chair and conveying into his face every possible kind of passion, blending one into the other, and as it were shadowing them with a prodigious number of gradations. At one moment you laughed, at another you cried ; now he terrified you, and presently you conceived yourself something horrible, he seemed so terrified at you. Afterwards he drew his features into the appearance of such dignified wisdom that Minerva might have been proud of the portrait ; and then—degrading yet admirable transition—he became a driveller. In short, his face became what he obliged you to fancy it : age, youth, plenty, poverty, everything it assumed.' He gave one of his 'rounds' before a select company of actors and literary men at Paris, beginning with the dagger scene from 'Macbeth,' and finishing by the representation of a pastry-cook's boy, who had let fall a tray of tarts, in which stupid surprise, terror, and despairing grief succeeded each other upon his features with marvellous fidelity. The spectators were struck with astonishment and admiration. Grimm fell into enthusiasm. Marmontel pronounced *that* to be the only real style of acting. It would be difficult to say how many sculptors and painters he sat to. There was one very striking picture done, representing the comic Garrick peeping through folding-doors and laughing at the tragic Garrick, seated in a chair. His portrait was hung in every house. Nor was all this the mere lionising freak of the mercurial Parisians ; for twelve years afterwards Gibbon heard him spoken of with affectionate regard and with wishes for his return.

Garrick remained three weeks in Paris, then proceeded to Italy, taking up his abode for three months at Naples,

where he was *feted* by all the English inhabitants. ‘I am always with Lord Spencer, Lord Oxford and Lord Palmerston,’ he wrote home. Next we find him in Rome from morning till night hunting among the curiosity-shops for china and rare books. At Parma he was invited to a select dinner-party given by the Duke of York to the Duke of Parma, where he recited the dagger scene from ‘Macbeth,’ and so delighted the Italian Prince that next day he sent him a superb snuff-box, and gave him apartments in the palace.

Soon, however, he began to turn longing glances towards old Drury. He had left Colman to manage in his absence, and put a young fellow named Powell, a member of a spouting club, in his place as leading actor. Lacy, in whom there was always an undercurrent of bitterness against his partner, wrote to tell him he need not hurry home, as the houses were crowded without him. Not too well satisfied, Garrick went back to Paris, where he was received with the same enthusiasm as before. He continued to make anxious inquiries as to whether his return was talked about and desired in London, and threw out a feeler in the shape of a pamphlet called ‘The Sick Monkey,’ in which, according to his usual fashion of anticipating censure, he supposed a congregation of animals met to talk about and abuse him and his travels. ‘It is among the few things he wrote,’ remarks Davies, ‘that one would wish not to remember. I believe it scarce ever urged public curiosity to read it, for it died almost still-born.’

He arrived in England in April, 1765, and mortified, probably, at the indifference with which his pamphlet had been received, gave out that he intended to retire from the stage. Very soon the King, through certain distinguished personages, sent him a remonstrance—he must not retire—would he not appear at his Majesty’s request? This was precisely what he was angling for. He made his reappearance on the 14th of September, 1765; the King was present, the house was crammed to the ceiling. As he entered upon

the stage to speak the prologue he had written for the occasion, he was greeted, not with clapping of hands, but with a succession of ringing cheers. The play selected was ‘*Much Ado About Nothing*.’ Benedick had always been one of his finest impersonations, and the audience soon discovered that there was no falling off in the great actor, nay, they even imagined that his Parisian visit had given a polish, an elegance to his performance such as it had not before possessed. So careful and judicious was he, however, that with the exception of two or three parts of which he was sure, he did not appear in any of the characters in which Powell had achieved his successes. That young actor soon afterwards went over to Rich. His career was a short one; he died in Bristol, in 1769, in the cathedral of which city there is a monument to his memory. Garrick now created a *furore* greater even than that of the first year of his career; the theatre was nightly filled to overflowing, and people of the highest degree bribed the attendants to admit them by a private way, to avoid the crush at the public entrance. From that time public favour remained true and steadfast to him, and never again did he appear before a thin house.

The Mayor and Corporation of Stratford presented him with a snuff-box made of Shakespeare’s mulberry-tree, and requested his bust and portrait for their New Town Hall. This suggested to him the Shakespeare Jubilee, and this doubtful display of homage to the great poet took place in 1768. An enormous rotunda was erected in the meadows of Stratford, dresses and properties were sent down from Drury Lane, and fifteen hundred people, including many lords and dukes, poured into the little town. But the Stratfordians, who had not yet practically experienced the blessings of being the fellow-townsmen of a mighty genius, were opposed to the affair, and would not give the slightest assistance, although they were astute enough to raise high their charges to the visitors on the occasion. On the first day, Garrick and the Corporation, wearing silver medals struck

for the purpose, went publicly to church, where Arne's Oratorio of 'Judith' was performed : after which there was a dinner in the Rotunda and a ball at night. The next day odes were sung, and Garrick declaimed, and there was to have been a grand procession, but the rain came down in torrents, the Avon rose and threatened to carry away the huge tent, in which there was a masquerade at night. As it was, the horses had to wade through the meadows knee-deep to reach it, and planks were stretched from the entrance to the floors of the carriages for the guests to alight. Such a flood had not been witnessed in that part of the country in the memory of man. Fireworks were let off, but the rain extinguished them, and the whole affair was a *fiasco*. One of the best Foote stories is told in connection with the Jubilee. After the dinner he and Murphy were strolling on the banks of the river, when a very corpulent, richly dressed gentleman accosted them, and eagerly desired to have a little conversation with so famous a wit as Mr. Foote. 'Has the county of Warwick the honour of giving birth to you, sir, as well as to Shakespeare?' inquired the cynic, presently. 'No,' said the gentleman ; 'I come out of Essex.' 'Out of Essex?' said Foote, 'and *who drove you?*'

Garrick amply compensated himself for the loss he had sustained at Stratford, by producing a sketch at Drury Lane that autumn, entitled 'The Jubilee,' into which was introduced the show that was to have paraded the streets of the town, the procession of all the great characters of Shakespeare's plays in their finest situations - Macbeth with the daggers, Juliet with the bowl, Ophelia, distraught, etc. This spectacle, splendidly mounted, filled Drury Lane for ninety-four nights. But from beginning to end the Jubilee was in very bad taste, and reflects little credit upon its inventor. Yet it was not so bad as the production, in 1772, of his version of Hamlet, in which he cut out Osric, and the Gravediggers, and the fencing scene between the Prince and Laertes. 'I had sworn,' he said, 'I would not leave the

stage until I had rescued that noble play from the rubbish of the fifth act!' And yet in his day he was regarded as an idolater of Shakespeare! Although these alterations were received unfavourably by the public, they kept the stage until 1780.

As the years passed on, he played less frequently, much of his time being spent in visits to the seats of the many noblemen and gentlemen who were proud to call him friend. When Lacy died in 1773, the entire management devolved upon him. His less frequent attendance at the theatre caused a relaxation of discipline; and between 1770 and 1776 the profits declined from £9,463 to £4,500. These considerations, failing health consequent upon the advance of age, and above all malicious criticism that began to hint he was too old for Ranger and Hamlet, at length warned him it was time to quit for ever the scene of his brilliant triumphs. The announcement of his farewell performances created a great sensation, people flocked up to town from all parts of the country—no small undertaking in those days—and even foreigners came over to England to witness them; aristocratic admirers fought at the thronged doors for admittance, and very frequently failed. He played a round of all his great parts. 'Last night,' he writes in one place, 'I played Abel Drugger for the last time. I thought the audience were cracked, they almost turned my brain.' Hannah More, who came up from Bristol for these representations, says: 'I pity those who have not seen him. Posterity will never be able to form the slightest idea of his perfection. The more I see him the more I admire. I have seen him within these three weeks take leave of Benedick, Sir John Brute, Kitely, Abel Drugger, Archer, and Leon. It seems to me as if I was assisting at the obsequies of the different poets. I feel almost as much pain as pleasure.' It was on the 10th of June, 1776, that he made his last appearance, as Don Felix in 'The Wonder,' and never, it was said, did he play with more fire and

energy, more lightness and animation. Then in a short speech, broken by tears, he wished the audience farewell, and with a long lingering gaze upon the vast concourse before him, scarcely a face of which was not bedewed with sympathetic tears, he slowly retired. ‘Farewell—farewell!’ echoed a hundred voices choked with emotion as he passed behind the curtain, which was never again to rise upon him. There was to have been a farce, but the audience, with a fine sense of the fitness of things, would not permit it to be played. The entire profits of the last night he gave to the Drury Lane Fund for Decayed Actors, which had been started under his auspices ten years previously, and his various donations to which amounted to £5,000.\* Soon after his retirement he disposed of his share of the patent to Brinsley Sheridan.

He did not long enjoy his leisure, for within three years afterwards a magnificent funeral procession conveyed his remains to Westminster Abbey. The line of carriages reached from the Strand to the sacred building, the streets were crowded with spectators, the Bishop of Rochester received the coffin, the Duke of Devonshire, the Earls Camden, Ossory, Spencer, and Lord Palmerston were pall-bearers, Burke, Fox, and other celebrities stood beside the grave that was to receive the mortal remains of the great actor. His brother George survived him but a few days. He had always been David’s factotum, and his first inquiry on entering the theatre at night was, ‘Has David wanted me?’ Some one was remarking upon the singularity of his dying so soon after his brother. ‘Oh,’ replied Bannister, ‘David wanted him.’

\* A Theatrical Fund for Decayed Actors had long been talked of, but the project first took form from an actress, Mrs. Hamilton, of Covent Garden, having been reduced by losses from comfort to destitution. An Address was published, and in three days £100 was collected. This was in 1765. Upon Garrick’s return to England, he at once set about establishing a similar fund for Drury Lane. Both were legalised by Act of Parliament ten years after their foundation.

Of the respect in which Garrick was held, a proof was given not long before his death. One night he was the sole occupant of the gallery of the House of Commons during a fierce discussion between two Members, one of whom moved that he should be ordered to withdraw; Burke sprang up indignantly and opposed the motion to expel the man who, he said, had taught them all they knew, and Fox and Townshend followed, in the same strain of eulogy, calling him their preceptor.

He was sadly missed at Hampton, for the poor there lost in him a kind friend, and his benefactions to them were continually increasing. A few years before his death he instituted an annual feast for the children. He left behind a fortune of £100,000.

Mrs. Garrick survived her husband many years, honoured and respected by all who knew her. She was once visited at Hampton by Queen Charlotte, who finding her engaged in peeling onions took up a knife and joined her. The Prince of Wales and his brothers made frequent calls at the villa. On the 1st October, 1822, Elliston invited her to a private view of Drury Lane, which he had just redecorated. While preparing for the visit a servant handed her a cup of tea, but she had scarcely put it to her lips when she fell back and expired, in her ninety-ninth year.

Garrick was the author of several original pieces, as well as of alterations of Shakespeare, Wycherly, Beaumont and Fletcher, etc., about forty in all; and some of the finest parts of 'The Clandestine Marriage' were from his pen. He is credited with the conceptions of Lord Ogleby and Mrs. Heidelberg, with half the second act, a portion of the fourth, and the whole of the fifth. Of his other works, 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'High Life Below Stairs' alone keep the stage; although 'Lethe,' 'The Country Girl,' 'Miss in Her Teens,' and 'The Lying Valet,' were great favourites for years after his death. Without rising to any particular excellence, most of them are clever and bright.

He also wrote about one hundred prologues and epilogues, and even Johnson acknowledged, that although Dryden had written superior ones, Garrick had written more good prologues than even 'glorious John.'

As a conversationalist he was inferior only to Foote, and the inferiority was well compensated for by his good-nature. This amiable feature and his great tact are well illustrated by an anecdote in Cumberland's 'Memoirs.' Cumberland and Garrick were dining with Foote one day when a certain Sir Robert Fletcher dropped in and made a fourth at table. Presently Sir Robert rose to depart, but instead of at once quitting the room he loitered behind a screen which concealed the door long enough to hear his host begin to ridicule him. 'I am not gone, Foote,' he said, suddenly reappearing; 'spare me till I am out of hearing; and now with your leave I'll stay till these gentlemen depart, and then you shall amuse me at their cost, as you have amused them at mine.' Even Foote's impudence was not proof against such a shock; but what threatened to be a very disagreeable *contretemps* was averted by Garrick's genius and good-nature. 'I never saw him,' says the narrator, 'in a more amiable light; the infinite address and ingenuity that he exhibited, in softening the enraged guest, and reconciling him to pass over an affront as gross as could well be put upon a man, were at once the most comic and the most complete I ever witnessed.' 'Garrick's conversation,' said Johnson, 'is gay and grotesque. It is a dish of all sorts, but all good things.' But he adds that it wanted solidity and sentiment, although in the latter he was very powerful and pleasing at times. Yet a smart repartee would silence him for the whole evening; he must take the lead, and could not bear interruption. So great was his vivacity, that Johnson said, 'it drove away the thoughts of death from any association with him.' His private character was excellent. To again quote the old Leviathan, who occasionally loved to abuse him, though he would not suffer anyone else to do so: 'He had a mind

seasoned with pious reverence. . . . He was a very good man, the cheerfulest man of his age; a decent liver in a profession which is supposed to give indulgence to licentiousness.' 'Nature,' says Richard Cumberland, 'had done so much for him that he could not help being an actor. His eye was so penetrating, so speaking, his brow so movable, and all his features so plastic and so accommodating, that wherever his mind impelled them they would go, and before his tongue could give the text his countenance would express the spirit and passion of the part he was charged with.'

'Garrick's misfortune,' says a contemporary, 'was, he had never due confidence in his talents: his love of fame was unbounded, but "it was tremblingly alive all o'er;" he lived in a whispering gallery, always listening and always anxious about himself. Upon such a disposition they who lackeyed after him could make what impression they pleased; a word was sufficient; he took fire at the slightest hint, and they who had sinister purposes to answer saw the avenues by which they were obliged to approach him.'

He was perpetually acting, whether upon the stage, in his own house, in the houses of his friends, or even in the streets. He would suddenly stop in the midst of a public thoroughfare and look up at the sky, as though he saw something remarkable, until a crowd gathered about him, then he would turn away with the wild stare of insanity. He could not sit down to have his hair dressed without terrifying the barber by making his face assume every shade of expression, from the deepest tragic gloom to the vacancy of idiotcy; and so plastic were his features, that it is said he could draw them into the exact representation of any person familiar to him. Cumberland tells a story how at a certain dinner Garrick, being put a little out of the way, quitted the company, and was presently found in the back-yard acting a turkey-cock to a little black boy, who was capering for joy and continually crying out, 'Massa Garrick do so make me laugh; I shall die with laughing!' His enemies ascribed

these freaks to a restless egotism that must always be conspicuous, but might they not rather have arisen from the over-exuberant animal spirits of ‘the cheerfulest man of his age?’ When Johnson said that his death eclipsed the gaiety of nations, he was thinking as much of the private man as of the actor.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### CHARLES MACKLIN.

His early adventures—Original ideas upon acting—Engaged by Rich—Sadler’s Wells in the last century—A man about town—Victimised—Quarrel and reconciliation with Quin—‘The Jew that Shakespeare drew’—Quarrel with Garrick—Turns innkeeper and lecturer—Foote’s witticisms upon his subjects—Bankruptcy—A dramatic author—A riot—Characteristics—Lawsuits—Proposes to turn farmer at eighty-five—‘The Man of the World’—Anecdotes of his longevity—Last appearance upon the stage—Anecdotes of last years.

MACKLIN’S career commenced among the contemporaries of Betterton, and did not terminate until the Kemble school was firmly established. As an actor, he stands alone, following no school, although but for the appearance of Garrick he might have founded one, for he certainly anticipated his great rival in introducing a more natural style of acting.

The year of Macklin’s birth is believed, from contemporary recollections, to have been 1690. But there were few well-kept registers in those times, and in his latter days he was a little confused upon the point, usually referring to his daughter, who, he used to say, had a better memory for dates than he had. The lady, from a feminine weakness perhaps, fixed a later date than the one given, but the weight of evidence, into the particulars of which I have not space to enter, is against her. His real name was M’Laughlin, abbreviated afterwards, to suit Saxon tongues, to Macklin. His family claimed to be descended from one of the kings

of Ireland. He was born two months before the battle of the Boyne, in which his father was engaged on the side of King James, and at which his mother was present. In the flight the poor infant was carried away in a ‘kish’ (one of two wicker baskets placed across a horse’s back, in which to carry provisions). His first recollections were of living with his father and mother on a small farm in Ulster. An uncle, a Catholic priest, undertook his education, but finding his pupil too obstreperous, gave up the attempt in despair; after which a lady took him into her house, where at nine years old he played Monimia, in ‘The Orphan,’ in some private theatricals, and so made his first step in his future profession. At fourteen he was apprenticed to a saddler, but did not take at all kindly to the business. There is a story told by one of his biographers of his running away from Dublin, where he was apprenticed, and in company with some other scapegraces coming over to London; of his lodging at a low tavern in Southwark, where he became such an attraction to the house by his wit, songs, and powers of mimicry, that the landlady, a middle-aged widow, trepanned him, boy as he was, into a marriage, which was performed by some hedge-parson; but by-and-by his uncle, discovering his whereabouts, came over, carried him off from this harpy, and home again. Soon he gave up the saddlery business and engaged as a badgeman at Trinity College, where he recommended himself to the rollicking students by the same talents that had won the favour of the Southwark widow. When about twenty he turned stroller, and played in barns both in Ireland and England, with a brogue that must have sounded rather peculiar in high tragedy, which he affected. But there was promise and originality about the uneducated, ill-trained Irish lad, who had ideas of his own about acting, which did not at all coincide with those of his contemporaries.

After years of this vagabondage, he, in 1725, procured an engagement with Rich and appeared at Lincoln’s Inn

Fields, as Alcander in ‘*Edipus*.’ The manager did not approve of the aforesaid ideas. ‘I spoke so familiar,’ Macklin used to say when relating the story, ‘and so little in the hoity-toity tone of the tragedy of that day, that he told me I had better go to grass for another year or two.’ So he went back to strolling, played tragedy at Southwark Fair and harlequin at Sadler’s Wells, of which last-named place in after years he used to relate anecdotes which give strange pictures of the manners of the age. ‘I remember the time,’ he would say, ‘when the price of admission there was threepence, except a few places scuttled off at the sides of the stage at sixpence, reserved for people of fashion who occasionally came to see the fun. Here we smoked and drank porter and rum and water, as much as we could pay for, and every man had his doxy that liked it; and though we had a very odd mixture of company (for I believe it was a good deal the baiting-place of thieves and highwaymen), there was little or no rioting. There was a public there, sir, that kept one another in awe. The entertainments consisted of hornpipes, ballad-singing, pantomime ballet, and some lofty tumbling, and all done by daylight, and there were four or five exhibitions daily. There was a fellow posted outside, who, when he thought there was enough people collected for a second exhibition, used to come into the house and shout out, ‘Is Hiram Fisteman here?’ This was the signal agreed upon, upon which they concluded the entertainment with a song, dismissed that audience, and prepared for a second representation.’

From London he returned to the provinces. A jovial boon companion, who could take his two or three bottles, a famous player at fives, a general lover, a formidable boxer, a great pedestrian, he was a favourite wherever he went. In 1730 we find him back at Lincoln’s Inn, still holding an inferior position. But by degrees he was winning his way in public favour. He was a well-known man about the theatres, the taverns and coffee-houses of Covent Garden,

at the shilling and sixpenny ordinaries of Clare Market, and among the butchers of that neighbourhood—persons of theatrical importance in those days, staunch friends of the players, and ever ready to give their formidable presence in the gallery when riots were apprehended. He was one of the St. Alban's Club, the particular feature of which was that the members walked once a week from London to dine at the Abbey town, and back again the same day—no bad pedestrian feat.

Leaving Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1733, he joined Fleetwood's company at Drury Lane, where he appeared as Captain Brazen, in 'The Recruiting Officer,' with considerable success. About two years afterwards he married Miss Grace Purvor, who, under his instruction, became a very clever actress of comic and old women's characters. In the meantime, he and his manager, being something of kindred spirits, became great cronies; and Theophilus Cibber, who had hitherto held the post, being deposed, he became his chief adviser. 'And,' says Victor, 'he was a man of capabilities sufficient to raise him to the office of Lord High Cardinal.' But these favours were not without serious drawbacks. Fleetwood, although a gentleman by birth, was a coarser Sheridan, pleasant and fascinating in manners, but addicted to low company, a spendthrift not particular whom he victimised. Macklin had to pay dearly for his friendship; Fleetwood often borrowed of him small sums, such as thirty or forty pounds, without ever repaying them. 'This,' says the actor, 'was usually after a snug benefit night, and sometimes after a lucky run at play (for I was a gambler, sir, at that time). I did not much mind to press him for, considering them as nest eggs in his hands, and as a kind of security for my engagements at his theatre, which even at that time were considerable: but I soon found I was a chicken in point of worldly knowledge to my chief: whilst I thought I was teaching myself in my profession, he was plotting my ruin. Not that he had any particular an-

tipathy to me, sir, far from it ; but somebody was to save him from a temporary embarrassment, and I was found to be the most convenient scapegoat.'

At length Fleetwood prevailed upon him to be his bond for £3,000. But as time went on, and more and more of the unscrupulous character of the man for whom he had so heavily engaged himself was revealed to Macklin, he began to get uneasy. One night, while Fleetwood was conducting the Prince of Wales by torchlight round Bartholomew Fair, Macklin, who had been away in the provinces, looking pale and excited, his clothes in great disorder, suddenly appeared before him. He said he had been arrested for debt at Bristol, had broken out of his prison and killed the gaoler, but that if he were released of that bond for £3,000 he could compromise with his creditor ; and it must be done at once. Fearful of a disturbance in the presence of the Prince, Fleetwood promised to meet him in an hour at a certain tavern in Clare Market. Knowing the violent character of the man with whom he had to deal, he kept his word, and finding another victim—Paul Whitehead, who ultimately had to pay the entire amount—upon whom to shift the responsibility, released Macklin from his engagement. It need scarcely be added that the Bristol story was all a ruse. On one very momentous occasion, however, when he was arrested on no less a charge than murder, Fleetwood had stood his friend. The fatal affair rose out of a practical joke. An actor named Hallam had taken away a wig which Macklin wore in a farce ; a quarrel ensued, with violent language on both sides : finally Macklin thrust at the other with his cane, intending to push him out of the green-room, but the point glancing upward entered the unfortunate man's eye, penetrated to the brain, and killed him upon the spot. Macklin was tried for murder at the Old Bailey. Fleetwood used all his influence for him, and the jury brought it in manslaughter, but without malice afore thought, and the actor was released.

He was known at this time by the nickname of the 'Wild Irishman,' and his violent temper frequently involved him in quarrels. He had one with Quin—in which, however, the latter was the aggressor—that might have had as fatal a termination as that just related. They were playing together in Wycherley's 'Plain Dealer'; Quin was Manly, Macklin, Jerry Blackacre. The latter, introducing some comic business in one of Manly's scenes, raised a laugh, much to the disgust of the arrogant tragedian, who, upon coming off, told him insolently not to come any of his damned tricks with him. Macklin replied that he had no idea of disturbing him, and only desired to show himself off a bit. In the next scene they had together, the laugh was repeated, and Quin again abused him. Macklin, growing a little warm, replied he could not play differently. Quin said he must and should, and the other gave him the lie direct. Upon which Quin, who was eating an apple, spit a mouthful into his hand and threw it in the other's face. The Irish blood was boiling in a moment. Seizing hold of him, Macklin thrust him into a chair and pummelled his face until it was so swollen he could scarcely speak. Quin demanded satisfaction, and said he would wait for him at the Obelisk in Covent Garden, after the performance. Macklin, however, had to play in the pantomime, during which Fleetwood came to him, told him he should not keep the appointment, and to prevent the meeting took him home to supper and made him sleep at his house. In the morning he advised him to end the matter by making some sort of apology to the tragedian, and Macklin won great renown by his spirited conduct towards bully Quin. But Quin never forgave him, and ever afterwards spoke of him with the most bitter malice. For years they never exchanged a word; but one day, after attending the funeral of a brother actor, Quin, Macklin, and some others, retired to a tavern in Covent Garden to spend the evening. One by one their companions went away, and at six o'clock the next morning

they were left alone over their cups. There was a long pause of embarrassment on both sides, until at length Quin broke the ice and drank Macklin's health ; Macklin returned the compliment. Then after another pause, Quin said, 'There has been a foolish quarrel, sir, between you and me, which, though accommodated, I must confess, I have not been able to entirely forget till now. If you can forget it, give me your hand, and let us in future live together like brother actors.' The reconciliation was sealed by a fresh bottle, to which another and another succeeded, until Quin became so drunk that he was not able to speak or move. A chair was sent for, but one could not be found. Upon which Macklin, with the assistance of a couple of waiters, raised the ponderous burden upon his back and carried it, fast asleep, to its lodgings under the Covent Garden Piazza.

Macklin had been some years a member of the Drury Lane company, but, although esteemed as a sound and useful actor, had made no mark. Those peculiar ideas of his concerning his art, which had so disgusted John Rich, were stronger than ever. He was not content to follow the lead of the actors of the day; he and a young stage-struck fellow in the wine trade, named David Garrick, his inseparable companion, might have been seen at all times of the day walking up and down beneath the Covent Garden Piazza, discussing their theories, or in the Bedford after the play, in company with a witty spendthrift fellow about town called Samuel Foote. Casting about in his thoughts for some character especially adapted to his powers, he bethought him of Shylock. Shakespeare's 'Merchant of Venice' had not been acted since 1701, a spurious version by Lord Lansdowne, called 'The Jew of Venice,' in which Shylock was degraded to a kind of low-comedy part, having usurped its place. Macklin resolved to restore the original text, and imparted his ideas to Fleetwood, who at length, in 1741, gave a reluctant consent to the revival. When it was known that he intended to play the Jew as a serious character, the

actors laughed in their sleeves, and gleefully prophesied a failure. His keen observation and suspicious temper could read their thoughts, and he determined to encourage their belief and render their discomfiture the greater. At rehearsal, while requesting the others to do their best, he himself went through the part tamely and ineffectively. The plot succeeded, and the performers went about saying, ‘This hot-headed, conceited Irishman, having got some little reputation in a few parts, is going to take advantage of the manager’s favour to bring himself and the theatre into disgrace.’ Fleetwood being appealed to, begged him to give up the attempt. Upon which Macklin was obliged to confess the game he was playing. ‘I am only deceiving a set of men who envy me,’ he said; ‘but I’ll pledge my life on the success of the play.’ There had been so much talk and so many predictions and arguments over this revival, that it created a considerable sensation among playgoers, and on the night of the first representation the house was crowded, and with people of fashion. From the early scene he could perceive that he had a firm hold upon the audience, and from the critics in the pit he could hear, ‘Very well, very well indeed?’ ‘This man seems to know what he is about.’ ‘These encomiums,’ continues Macklin, ‘warmed but did not overset me. I knew where I should have the pull, which was in the third act, and reserved myself accordingly. At this period I threw out all my fire; and as the contrasted passions of joy for the merchant’s losses and grief for the elopement of Jessica open a fine field for an actor’s powers, I had the good fortune to please beyond my wildest expectation. The whole house was in an uproar of applause. When I went behind the scenes the manager complimented me very highly on my performance, and significantly added, “Macklin, you were right at last.” My brethren in the green-room joined in his eulogium, but with different views. He was thinking of the increase of his treasury, they only of saving appearances—wishing at the same time I had broken

my neck in the attempt. The trial scene wound up the fulness of my reputation: here I was well listened to; and here I made such a silent yet forcible impression upon the audience that I retired from this great attempt well satisfied. On my return to the green-room after the play was over, it was crowded with nobility and critics, who all complimented me in the warmest and most unbounded manner; and the situation I found myself in, I must confess, was one of the most flattering and intoxicating in my whole life. No money, no title could purchase what I felt. And let no man tell me after this what fame will not inspire a man to do, and how far the attainment of it will not remunerate his greatest labours. By G——, sir, though I was not worth £50 in the world at the time, yet let me tell you I was Charles the Great for that night.'

Lichtenberg, who saw him play the part late in life, thus describes his acting: 'Picture to yourself a somewhat portly man, with a yellowish, coarse face, a nose by no means deficient in length, breadth, or thickness, and a mouth, in the cutting of which Nature's knife seems to have slipped as far as the ear, on one side at least, as it appeared to me. His dress is black and long, his trousers likewise long and wide; his three-cornered hat is red—I presume after the fashion of Italian Jews. The first words he speaks on coming on the stage are slow and full of import. "Three thousand ducats." The two *th*'s and the two *s*'s, especially the last after the *t*, Macklin mouths with such unction, that one would think he were at once testing the ducats and all that could be purchased with them. This at starting at once accredits him with the audience in a way which nothing afterwards can damage. Three such words, so spoken in that situation, mark the whole character. In the scene where, for the first time, he misses his daughter, he appears without his hat, with his hair standing on end, in some places at least a finger's length above the crown, as if the wind from the gallows had blown it up. Both hands are firmly clenched,

and all his movements are abrupt and convulsive. To see such emotion in a grasping, fraudulent character, generally cool and self-possessed, is fearful.' It is said that George II. was so impressed by this performance, that he could not sleep all night after witnessing it. The next morning, while they were holding council, Walpole happened to remark, 'I wish there was some way of frightening the House of Commons.' 'Send them to the theatre to see that Irishman act,' replied his Majesty. Alternated with other pieces, the 'Merchant of Venice' ran through the entire season, drawing crowded houses. Macklin received an invitation to dine with Bolingbroke and Pope at Battersea. The latter's couplet on his performance—

'This is the Jew  
That Shakespeare drew'—

is well known, and the nineteenth night of the run being his benefit, Bolingbroke sent him a purse containing twenty guineas, such a present being then considered a compliment.

By-and-by Fleetwood became so deeply in debt to the actors, that there was a general revolt of the whole company. This brought about the famous quarrel between Garrick and Macklin. They had pledged themselves to stand by each other throughout the dispute. Fleetwood, however, on account of their old intimacy, was more incensed against Macklin than against any of the others; and when, after much difficulty, the quarrel was arranged, and all the revolters were re-engaged, he made an exception to his whilom crony, and no persuasions could move him. According to their agreement, Macklin considered that Garrick should not, under such conditions, have gone back to the theatre; and according to the strict code of honour he was probably right: but, on the other hand, it would not have been just to have sacrificed a whole body of people—and without the attraction of the great star there was no hope of success—for one man, more especially as Garrick offered to find an

engagement for Macklin's wife, provide for him in Ireland, and make up to him what was deficient of the Drury Lane salary out of his own pocket. But the hot-headed Irishman would listen to no terms except his bond. He went about everywhere detailing his grievances and exciting sympathy, and on the opening night the theatre was filled with his friends. Garrick's appearance upon the stage was the signal for a general uproar ; hisses, groans, and cries of 'Off, off !' sounded from all sides, while showers of apples, rotten eggs, and peas were hurled at him. To such a height did the riot proceed that the curtain had to be dropped, and the performance terminated. The next night the manager brought to his aid the *élite* of Hockley-in-the-Hole, and all the pugilists he could muster. Just before the curtain rose, Broughton, a celebrated prize-fighter of the day, stood up in the pit and addressed the house. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I'm told some persons have come here with the intention of interrupting the play ; now I have come to hear it, and have paid my money, and I advise those who have come with such a view to go away and not hinder my diversion.' This speech caused a tremendous uproar ; there was a free fight between the rival parties, but the 'bruisers' got the best of it, cleared the pit of the enemy, and the performance proceeded. Macklin published a statement of the affair, and scattered handbills filled with abuse of Garrick and calling upon the public to take up the quarrel. All this would be considered very absurd nowadays, but it caused a considerable stir at a time when the theatre was an institution, when it was said there were four estates—the King, the Lords, the Commons, and the Theatres. Macklin never forgave Garrick for this business—although as soon as the latter became one of the managers of Drury Lane he engaged both him and his wife—and his witty and sarcastic sayings have done as much to fasten upon the great actor the charge of meanness and rapacity as have those of Foote. Barred out of the patent theatres, he opened the Haymarket in the summer of 1744,

and it was during that season Samuel Foote made his first appearance—as Othello (‘) to Macklin’s Iago. The company was a scratch one, half composed of amateurs, his pupils, of whom Foote was one; for Macklin had started the art which has so many professors in our days—the art of teaching acting. He also gave lectures on elocution.

In the following winter, after repeated solicitations, Fleetwood relented and took him back; but that he had to eat humble pie is evident from a prologue written by himself, which he delivered on his opening night, previous to the ‘Merchant of Venice’—judiciously chosen for his reappearance. Here are the first lines of the address :

‘From scheming, pelting, famine, and despair,  
Behold, to grace restored, an exiled player;  
No revolution plots are mine again;  
You see, thank heav’n, the quietest of men.’

Macklin was never long constant to any theatre. Not conciliatory in his manner, suspicious and jealous in his disposition, when he found the least difficulty thrown in his way he became restive and ungovernable. The elder Sheridan, then manager of the Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin, caught him in one of these moods in the spring of 1748, after his first season under Garrick’s management at Drury Lane, and made him and his wife the offer of £800 per annum for two years. So tempting an offer was at once accepted. But he had been at Dublin scarcely a month, when he discovered that the manager chose to perform in tragedy as well as in comedy, and that his name was printed in larger type in the playbills. This excited his discontent, and he became so intolerable that at last Sheridan shut the doors against him, and gave orders that neither he nor his wife should be again admitted. Macklin commenced a Chancery suit, and after waiting about the whole winter returned to England, minus some hundred pounds, and with this lawsuit upon his shoulders.

In 1753, he suddenly resolved to retire from the stage.

Garrick gave him the use of Drury Lane for his farewell benefit, and wrote a prologue. It was on this occasion that he formally introduced his daughter to the public, although she had previously appeared as Jane Shore and Lady Townley. Macklin was a victim to new ideas: he was always conceiving some wonderful scheme, by which he was to make his fortune and render himself happy evermore. From the conception of the idea to its fulfilment he knew no rest. The craze on this occasion was to become a licensed victualler, the landlord of a tavern under the Covent Garden Piazza, standing upon what is now the site of the Tavistock Hotel, and to open a school of oratory, which he called 'The British Inquisition.' The advertisement by which the latter undertaking was heralded is so extraordinary that it is worth transcribing:

'At Macklin's Great Room in Hart Street, Covent Garden, this day, being the 21st of November, will be opened

#### THE BRITISH INQUISITION.

'This Institution is upon the plan of the ancient Greek, Roman, and modern French and Italian societies of liberal investigation. Such subjects in arts, sciences, literature, criticism, philosophy, history, politics, and morality as shall be found useful and entertaining to society will be there lectured upon and freely debated; particularly Mr. Macklin intends to lecture upon the Comedy of the Ancients, the use of their masks and flutes, their mimes and pantomimes, and the use and abuse of the stage. He will likewise lecture upon the rise and progress of the modern Theatres, and make a comparison between them and those of Greece and Rome, and between each other he proposes also to lecture upon each of Shakespeare's plays; to consider the original stories whence they are taken; the artificial or inartificial use, according to the laws of the drama, that Shakespeare has made of them; his fable, moral character, passion, manners, will likewise be criticised, and how his capital characters have been acted heretofore, are acted, and ought to be acted. And as the design of this inquiry is to endeavour at an acquisition of truth in matters of taste, particularly theatrical, the lecture being ended any gentleman may offer his thoughts upon the subject.'

'The doors will be open at five, the lecture begin precisely at seven o'clock, every Monday and Friday evening. There is a public ordinary every day at four o'clock, price three shillings, each person to drink port, claret, or whatever liquor he shall choose.'

Now, as Macklin understood nothing of Greek and Latin, he could not discourse very learnedly upon the classical

drama ; as his knowledge of French was not sufficient to enable him to read the language, he could not obtain much assistance from that next best source : and as he was totally ignorant of the contemporary literature of Shakespeare, he could scarcely be expected to throw much light upon the originals of the great dramatist's plots. The whole affair consequently degenerated into something very like burlesque, which was greatly intensified by the portentous gravity with which Macklin, attired in full dress, gave forth his nothings. The wits made merry over it, more especially Foote, who, always on the alert for new topics of satire, used regularly to attend these lectures, join in the discussion that followed, and exercise his wit so freely upon the lecturer, that by-and-by he became the chief attraction of the place. One night the subject of the discourse was the cause of the prevalence of duelling in Ireland. The lecturer, tracing back the early history of the country, had got as far as Elizabeth, when Foote rose up and intimated that he desired to say something. ‘Well, sir, and what have you to say upon this subject?’ demanded Macklin. ‘Only to crave a little attention. I think I can settle the point in a few words,’ replied Foote. ‘What o’clock is it?’ ‘What has that to do with the question, sir?’ ‘Everything ; will you please to answer me?’ Very much annoyed, Macklin pulled out his watch, and told him it was half-past ten. ‘Very well,’ pursued Foote, ‘about this time every gentleman in Ireland, who can possibly afford it, is in his third bottle of claret, and in a fair way of getting drunk ; from drunkenness he proceeds to quarrelling, from quarrelling to duelling, and there’s an end of the chapter.’ Amidst the laughter that followed, Macklin, in great dudgeon, shut up his book, and brought the lecture to a close. In the following summer Foote gave burlesque lectures, *& la* Macklin, at the Haymarket.

A description of one will give the reader an idea of all. Macklin had in one of his discourses asserted that the Greek dramatic construction was perfectly applicable to the

modern tragedy ; an idea which Foote ridiculed in this manner. He supposed a drama in which all London was struck with terror at the sudden appearance of a superhuman-looking being, attended by a chorus of tinkers, tailors, blacksmiths, bakers, and other trades, and who held forth interminably upon his own omnipotence, threatened everybody and everything with fire and sword for no understandable reason, and announced his intention of destroying the Tower, reducing the city to slavery, and deposing the king ; upon which the chorus of traders fell upon their knees, tore their hair, beat their breasts, and entreated this terrible individual to forego his dreadful purpose. This would end the first act ; the remaining four would be devoted to the struggle of his contending passions ; in the end he would agree to their request, the curtain would fall to a hymn of thanksgiving and to the cheers from pit and gallery, to testify British appreciation of an entertainment so admirably suited to their tastes. On another occasion Foote represented Macklin sitting in his chair examining his pupils in the classics. After asserting that Aristophanes, Cicero, and Roscius were all inferior to their instructor, he wound up with the following charge : ‘Now, sir, remember, I, Charles Macklin, tell you, there are no good plays among the ancients, and only one great one among the moderns, and that is the “Merchant of Venice ;” and there’s only one part in that, and only one man that can play it. Now, sir, as you have been very attentive, I’ll tell you an anecdote of that play. When a royal personage, who shall be nameless, witnessed my performance of the Jew, he sent for me to his box, and remarked, “Sir, if I were not the Prince—ha—hum—you understand, I should wish to be Mr. Macklin.” Upon which I answered, “Royal sir, being Mr. Macklin, I do not desire to be the——”’ At this point, one night, Macklin, who was standing at the back unobserved, interrupted with, ‘No, I’ll be damned if I said that.’

Leaving the lecture-room, let us take a glimpse at the

tavern. Dinner was announced by public advertisement to be ready at four o'clock, and as the clock struck the hour, a bell affixed at the top of the house was rung for five minutes. Ten minutes afterwards the dinner was served, and then the room door was closed and no other person was admitted. Macklin himself, in full dress, always brought in the first dish, then with a low bow retired to the sideboard, where he remained with his two principal waiters, one on each side of him. He had been training the servants for months previously ; they were not allowed to open their lips save to answer the guests, and they communicated with each other while in the room only by signs. ‘From whom do you think I picked up those signs?’ he inquired of Foote one day. ‘Can’t say, I’m sure,’ was the reply. ‘From no less a person than James, Duke of York, who, you know, sir, first invented signs for the Fleet.’ ‘And it will be very good poetical justice,’ responded the wit, ‘as from the fleet they were taken, so to the *Fleet* [prison] both master and signals are likely to return !’ His jest was prophetic. Macklin left all the business department to his servants, who robbed him right and left, and brought him at length, in 1755, to bankruptcy. He continued for some little time to give instructions in acting, and aspirants were invited to display their powers at his house, between the hours of ten and twelve daily. Were a man solely bent upon witnessing the most absurd side of human vanity, he could not have hit upon a better plan of gratifying his fancy than by issuing such an invitation. Macklin was quite serious, but some ludicrous anecdotes are told of his experiences. One day he remarked that a gentleman, who was giving his idea of Othello, while violently gesticulating with his left arm kept the other immovable. Upon asking the reason, Macklin discovered that his right arm had been amputated. Fancy a one-armed Othello ! On another occasion Macklin received a letter from a gentleman, stating that as his voice and appearance were eminently feminine, he should like to study for that

line of characters, in which he thought he could make a success. Macklin desired him to call ; he did so, and proved to be a full-blooded nigger. Another stated his desire to play the cock in ‘Hamlet?’ Not so absurd an ambition then as it may seem to us. Sir Jonah Barrington says that in Dublin an actor was always employed to crow in the ghost scene in ‘Hamlet,’ that great value was set upon this part, which was always severely criticised by the gallery.

Both the Ordinary and ‘The British Inquisition’ being failures, Macklin sought about for a fresh idea. It appeared in the form of a scheme to build a new theatre in Dublin, in which he induced Barry, the actor, to join. He went over to Ireland to superintend, and full of his recent studies, pestered the workmen so much about the way in which the ancient Greek theatres were constructed, that the work was brought almost to a standstill. Before the house could be opened he had quarrelled with Barry about parts : he desired to alternate the leading characters of tragedy, the Macbeths and Hamlets, with him. Barry, perfectly aware that he would fail in them, objected ; the other insisted, and the end of the matter was that the partnership was dissolved, and he was retained only as an actor. The new Crow Street Theatre was opened in October, 1758 ; but by December, 1759, we find him entering into an engagement with the opposition house. It was never fulfilled, however, and he went back to Drury Lane at a large salary.

He now took up dramatic authorship. As early as 1745, he had produced a piece upon the subject of Perkin Warbeck, entitled ‘Henry VII., or the Popish Impostor’ —a most extraordinary production, in which Henry was represented as a Protestant champion, and Warbeck as the representative of the Papacy. It had as great a success as it deserved. In December, 1759, he produced in Dublin with success his farcical comedy of ‘Love à la Mode,’ and soon afterwards a very similar work, entitled

'The True Born Irishman,' intended to ridicule the absurd affectations of Irish ladies upon their return from England. With his usual restlessness he soon migrated from the Crow Street Theatre to that in Smock Alley, where, in 1764, he brought out a two-act farce entitled 'The True Born Scotchman,' afterwards elaborated into the famous comedy of 'The Man of the World.' There is a curious story told of the first run of this piece. One morning a young Scotch nobleman, who stood high in favour at the Castle, sent Macklin a handsome suit of laced dress clothes, with a letter, in which he begged his acceptance of that present, as a small mark of the pleasure he had received from the exhibition of so fine a picture of his grandfather! The next season he returned to Crow Street—and to England in 1767. Then back again to Ireland, alternating between Crow Street and Smock Alley, as he happened to quarrel or make friends with one or the other.

In 1772 he opened a correspondence with Colman, preparatory to commencing an engagement at Covent Garden, one of the principal stipulations of which was that he should perform Richard, Macbeth, and Lear, parts which he had never yet played in London, but in which, being now eighty-three, he was ambitious of appearing. The treaty was concluded. But soon afterwards Smith, who had been disappointed of an engagement elsewhere, joined the company. He was in possession of the leading tragedy parts, and Colman found some difficulty in adjusting the claims of the rival tragedians. At length it was arranged that they should alternate the parts, as Garrick and Barry had done in previous seasons. But as soon as Smith heard that Macklin was to open in Richard, he claimed that privilege. This was the beginning of a quarrel that led to serious consequences. Macklin was certainly unfitted for such parts, and the only one of the three he obtained was Macbeth, which, under his direction, was produced with an approach to correctness in scenery, costume, and adjuncts never before

attempted. Garrick's scarlet coat was discarded, and for the first time Macbeth appeared in the dress of a Highland chieftain, a garb worn by every succeeding Thane until Charles Kean's great revival of the tragedy. Macklin's figure was never calculated to represent the dignity of a warrior, and in his first scene, when the audience saw a clumsy old man, who looked more like a Scotch piper than a great general, stumping down the stage, at the head of a supposed conquering army, it impressed them only with a sense of the ridiculous and absurd. Yet there were notable points in the last act ; where the messenger tells him that Birnam Wood is moving, he terrified the audience with the terrible menace he threw into the words—‘If thou speak’st false,’ etc. But the performance was rather a lecture upon the part than a theatrical representation, and Arthur Murphy, praising its correctness, judgment, and energy, happily styled it ‘A black-letter copy of Macbeth.’

In the meantime the quarrel between the rivals was daily assuming greater proportions, and others were soon involved in it. Macklin accused Reddish and Sparks, two members of the company, of hissing him from the gallery ; then followed summonses before magistrates, and affidavits in the newspapers, which were full of squibs. He made speeches from the stage, and acted with such violence in the matter that the public took up the cudgels against him, and resolved to drive him from the stage. The night fixed upon for this enterprise was that on which he was to appear in his great part of Shylock. The house was crowded to the ceiling, and when the curtain drew up there was a cry for Colman to appear ; Bensley, one of the actors, came forward, but the audience would not listen to him. As Macklin, dressed for Shylock, advanced from the side scenes, and humbly supplicated to be heard, the riot became so furious that he was obliged to retire. After this he came on in his own clothes, but they would not allow him to speak—the cry was still for Colman. Macklin was on and off every two

minutes ; and when he was told that it was the desire of the audience he should never play on that stage again, he treated the announcement with so much contempt that they declared they would tear up the benches if the manager did not come forward. Then Bensley appeared carrying a board, on which was chalked, ‘At the command of the public, Mr. Macklin is discharged.’ This was greeted with a roar of applause. But the attempt to substitute ‘She Stoops to Conquer’ for the play announced brought forth more cries for Colman, who was at length compelled to appear to save his theatre from being wrecked. He asked the audience if it was their pleasure that Mr. Macklin should be discharged. There was a tremendous shout of ‘Yes !’ ‘Then he is discharged,’ said Colman. They would accept of no entertainment proposed, and at length the money taken at the doors was returned and the proceedings ended. We can very well understand how obnoxious Macklin could render himself after reading Holcroft’s description of his character ; which, if drawn with a harsh pencil, is no doubt strikingly accurate.

‘Macklin’s body,’ he says, ‘like his mind, was cast in a mould as rough as it was durable ; his aspect and address confounded his inferiors, and the delight he took in making others fear and admire him gave him an aversion from the society of those whose knowledge exceeded his own. Nor was he ever heard to allow superiority in any man. He had no respect for the modesty of youth or sex, but would say the most discouraging as well as the grossest things ; and felt pleasure in proportion to the pain he gave. It was common for him to ask his pupils why they did not rather think of becoming bricklayers than players. He was impatient of contradiction to an extreme ; and, when he found fault, if the person attempted to answer, he stopped him without hearing, by saying, “Ha ! you have always a reason for being in the wrong !” This impatience carried him still further—it often rendered him exceedingly abusive ; block-

head, fool, scoundrel, were familiar expressions with him. His passions were so irritable that the least opposition was construed into an unpardonable insult—and the want of immediate apprehension in his pupils subjected them to the most galling contempt. His judgment, however, was in general sound, and his instructions those of a master.' He was as remarkable for his pauses as the Kembles, and he reduced them to a system ; there were three—the moderate, the long, and the grand pause. While making the last, one night, the prompter, thinking he had forgotten his part, gave him the word ; finding he still remained silent, he prompted louder ; still Macklin did not speak, and the third time the prompter's voice was heard distinctly in front ; upon which, boiling with fury, Macklin rushed off the stage and knocked the man down ; then returning to the footlights, said coolly, by way of explanation, 'The fellow interrupted me in my grand pause.' Of his brusqueness, to give it the mildest term, many amusing anecdotes are told ; as, for instance, when dining in company with an Irish parson, he suddenly turned round, and addressing him, demanded dictatorially, 'Now, sir, what is your opinion of Terence's plays?' 'Do you mane the Latin edition?' inquired the parson, with a strong Milesian accent. 'Do you think I *mane* the Irish, and be d----d to you?' Imagine the horror and indignation of the reverend gentleman. As a set-off, however, against these harsher features of his character, it should be added that Macklin was a man of the strictest integrity, and whatever might be his circumstances, discharged every obligation with the utmost punctuality ; there are many stories told of his benevolence and generosity, which redound greatly to his honour.

To return to the riots. He plunged with all his love of litigation, heart and soul into a lawsuit, and brought a charge of conspiracy against Smith, Reddish, Sparks, and several non-professional gentlemen, who had aided and abetted them. The trial lasted some time, and judgment

was delivered by Lord Mansfield in favour of Macklin, who, however, having gained his point, manifested no vindictiveness towards the offenders, and let them off under the curious stipulation, that in addition to paying his law expenses, they should take £300 worth of tickets—£100 for his daughter's benefit, another for his own, and a third for the manager's. 'Mr. Macklin,' said the judge, 'I have always seen you play with merit, but you never acted so admirably as you have to-day.'

His banishment from the London stage lasted nearly three years, which period he passed playing in the provinces, in Ireland, and in Scotland. He reappeared for Miss Macklin's benefit in 1775 as Shylock, and Sir Archy Macsarcasm in '*Love à la Mode*' ; and afterwards as Richard (at last !). He now commenced an action against the managers of Covent Garden for the breach of engagement caused by his sudden dismissal, and claimed all arrears of salary from that time. The suit was continued through several years, and believing that he understood every matter better than anyone else, he undertook to answer all his bills in Chancery. On these occasions he gave notice to his family to have a fire kept up in his study, and that he was not to be interrupted on any account whatever till he chose to be visible. When he commenced business he locked himself up in this room, to which everything he required was brought, but in dumb show, no person being permitted to speak to him. Here also he slept, and whenever a thought struck him in the night he would jump out of bed and sit down to his desk. This suit also ended in a victory for him ; which he used with even greater generosity than his previous one, for upon the damages—£500—being paid to him, he handed the sum back to Mr. Harris, saying he was quite content with having established his legal rights, and that he trusted there would be no more ill blood between them.

When he was about eighty-five, he conceived the extraordinary whim of turning farmer, and actually used his best

endeavours to procure a farm of three or four hundred acres, in the neighbourhood of Cork. ‘I have read books on agriculture,’ he remarked to a friend, ‘and know the theory of farming better than half the bailiffs in England. I would act in Dublin in the winter, make engagements in England for the spring, be on my farm in the summer, and appear occasionally in Cork.’ Luckily for himself he could not procure a farm, and so the project, like so many others, fell through. At nearly ninety he was as vigorous and full of spirits as ever, could sing a good song, tell a good story, and take his bottle better than half the young men he associated with. He used to give some extraordinary illustrations of his great age. ‘O Lord, sir,’ he said one evening to a gentleman to whom he was relating some reminiscences, ‘I remember so many changes in human affairs that in some families I have almost lost the power of tracing their descent. An odd circumstance happened to me a few years ago upon this subject. A party of Irish gentlemen, who had come over here in the parliamentary vacation, asked me to sup with them. I did so, sir, and we all got very jolly together: insomuch that one of them was so drunk that I made a point of taking him on my back and carrying him downstairs to his chair. The next day the gentleman waited on me, and expressing his civilities, said he was sorry I should take so much unnecessary trouble. Here, sir, I stopped him short by telling him that one reason I had for carrying him on my back was that I carried either his father or his grandfather the same way fifty years ago, when he was a student at the Middle Temple.’ ‘Very true, sir,’ he answered: ‘I remember my father often telling it as a family story; but you are mistaken a little in point of genealogy, it was my *great-grandfather* that you did that kindness for.’

In 1781 he returned to England for the purpose of producing his ‘True Born Scotchman,’ which had never yet been played out of Ireland, and which he had long since elaborated into a five-act comedy. The manuscript had

lain at the Lord Chamberlain's office nearly ten years, and Macklin despaired of having it returned to him, when one day, dining with Sir Fletcher Norton and Mr. Dunning, he begged their opinions as to what a man should do to recover property when he knew by whom it was detained. They advised an action of Trover. 'Well,' said Macklin, 'the case is my own. Will you two undertake my cause?' They agreed. He explained the case, and by personal application they got back the play, but with a refusal to license it under its then title, it being considered as a reflection upon the Scottish nation. Upon which Macklin named it 'The Man of the World.' The comedy was highly successful, and his performance of Sir Pertinax was a masterpiece. When he first appeared in this character in England he was over ninety years of age. It was not until 1785 that he finally gave over his wandering life, and settled down permanently in London. But even then he arranged to act occasionally at Covent Garden. His first wife was dead, and he had married again; his daughter was dead, so was his son, yet still he remained green and vigorous. In 1788 his memory began to fail him. Yet he still acted. His last appearance upon the stage was for his own benefit, on the 7th May, 1789, in the character of Shylock. The manager from the first feared a collapse, yet knowing the old man's necessities he did not like to prohibit his appearance; as a precaution, however, he had another actor, Ryder, ready dressed for the part. When Macklin entered the green-room, attired with all his usual neatness and precision, he gazed about until his eye fell upon Mrs. Pope. 'My dear, are you to play to-night?' he asked. 'To be sure I am, sir. Don't you see I am dressed for Portia?' 'True, but who is to play Shylock?' he inquired with a vacant look. 'Why you, to be sure,' she answered. Then he recollected himself, and putting his hand to his forehead, exclaimed pathetically, 'God help me, I'm afraid my memory has left me!' He went on the stage, however, and delivered the first two or three speeches of

Shylock, but in such a manner that it was evident he did not understand what he was saying. After a while he recovered a little, and seemed to make an effort to rouse himself ; but in vain—there was a pause—then he came forward and addressed the audience, telling them he found himself unable to proceed, and that he hoped they would accept his substitute.

Even after this the tenor of his life was much as usual : he continued his morning walks, seizing upon old acquaintances by the arm or button-hole, lowering upon them his shaggy brows while holding forth upon some favourite topic with tremendous energy. He still regularly visited the afternoon club and the theatres, and when he appeared at the pit-door, however great the crowd might be, everybody made way for him until he reached his accustomed seat, of which no one ever thought of depriving him. If he could not hear distinctly he would rise up and address the actor with, ‘Sir, speak louder ; I cannot hear you.’ When the Prince and Princess of Wales paid their first visit to the theatre after their marriage, he rose with the rest of the audience upon their entrance. The Prince singled him out and bowed to him, and the Princess did the same, to the old man’s intense delight, and for days he could talk of nothing else. Gradually he sank into a state of imbecility, and at times laboured under the delusion that everybody was wronging him. More than once he hurried off to Bow Street to appeal to the magistrates ; but before he was at the end of his story his mind became a blank, and he had to be led home. It was now discovered that what with his love of roving and of litigation, his circumstances were in a very poor condition. Upon which Arthur Murphy suggested that his two best comedies, ‘Love à la Mode,’ and ‘The Man of the World,’ should be published by subscription. The proposition was eagerly taken up, and £1,582 being realised by it, an annuity of £200 was bought for himself, and another of £70 for his wife. He wrote the dedication to

Lord Camden himself; it is long, and lucid in expression, showing very little sign of failing brain-power. He lived until 1797. He was then, according to the computation I have chosen to adopt, one hundred and eight years old ; but even taking the latest date assigned for his birth, he was close upon one hundred. He was buried in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### SAMUEL FOOTE AND TATE WILKINSON.

His birth and family—At the Bedford—First literary production—History of the Haymarket Theatre—Foote's first appearance upon the stage—‘Diversions of the Morning’—‘A Dish of Tea’—A cat concert—‘Iterum, Iterum, Iterumque’—He sets up as a fortuneteller—His satire upon the Whitfieldites—‘One Legged George Faulkner’—Loses a limb—A tailors’ riot—‘The Christian Club’—A good story—The Duchess of Kingston—Nemesis—Death—Character—*Mots*—Johnson’s opinion of him—His comedies—Tate Wilkinson and his anecdotes of Garrick, Rich, etc., etc.

Foote belongs rather to the dramatic authors than to the actors, but no theatrical history would be complete without an account of that famous mimic and humourist, who was one of the most conspicuous characters of the age in which he lived. His father was a Cornish gentleman, and an M.P. ; his mother was the daughter of Sir Edmund Goodere. Samuel Foote was born at Truro, in the year 1720. When quite a boy his powers of mimicry were the delight of his parents’ friends ; while at school he equally delighted his schoolfellows by imitating the peculiarities of every visitor to his father’s house. He received his education at the Worcester Grammar School, and thence removed to Worcester College, Oxford, which he quitted with no inconsiderable classical attainments. He afterwards entered the Temple as a student for the Bar, but loved better to frequent the coffee-houses and taverns of Fleet Street and

the Strand than to pore over musty volumes. No young fellow spent his money more freely, no beau dressed more gaily than he. The Bedford Coffee House was his favourite haunt. A contemporary thus sketches his first appearance there : ' He came into the room, dressed out in a frock-suit of green and silver lace, bag-wig, sword, bouquet, and point ruffles, and immediately joined the critical circle at the upper end of the room. Nobody knew him. He, however, soon boldly entered into conversation, and by the brilliancy of his wit, the justness of his remarks, and the unembarrassed freedom of his manners, attracted the general notice. The buzz of the room went round, "Who is he?" which nobody could answer ; until a handsome carriage stopping at the door to take him to the assembly of a lady of fashion, they learned from the servants that his name was Foote, that he was a young gentleman of family and fortune, and a student of the Inner Temple.'

The fortune, however, was soon run through, and the young gentleman reduced to great straits. Making but little progress in his profession, he was under the necessity of trying other means of procuring money. His first effort was literary, and somewhat curious. His mother had two brothers, Sir John and Captain Goodere. The baronet had been recently strangled by the captain on board his own ship, and the murderer had since been convicted and hanged. A pamphlet, describing the particulars of the crime, trial, and execution, was the first offspring of Foote's pen. His biographers have been at a loss to understand the meaning of this strange production, but to me there is something highly characteristic of the man's cynical nature in the choice of such a subject, and in thus making the crime and disgrace of his family minister to his necessities, and these were pressing for the once exquisite *petit-maitre* was actually reduced to wear boots without stockings. One of the first investments he made out of the ten pounds paid him by the Old Bailey publisher for his effusion, was in the

purchase of two pairs of those necessary articles. While returning home he fell in with two old college friends, with whom he dined at a Fleet Street tavern ; as they were drinking their wine, one of them remarked the deficiency in his attire. ‘I never wear any at this time of year’ (it was summer), replied Foote, perfectly unabashed, ‘until I dress for the evening ; and you see,’ producing the two pairs he had bought, ‘I am well provided.’

Having frequently met at the Bedford, and perceiving him to be a young man of wit and education, Macklin, who had then just opened his school of instruction, persuaded him to try his fortune upon the stage.

In 1720, a carpenter, named John Potter, built a small theatre in the Haymarket, upon the site of the King’s Head Inn. The cost of the building, with scenery and dresses, was about £1,500. It was opened in 1721 by Aaron Hill with a play of his own, on the subject of Henry V., and afterwards let to a company of French comedians, who called themselves the servants of the Duke of Montague, and named it ‘The New French Theatre ;’ but it soon came to be known as ‘the Little Theatre in the Haymarket.’ Henry Fielding re-opened it in 1734, with that terrible social and political satire, ‘*Pasquin*,’ the effects of which have already been alluded to. Here Theophilus Cibber brought the deserters from Highmore’s Company ; and it was here that Macklin held his training school, and that Samuel Foote made his first appearance upon any stage as Othello, to his tutor’s Iago. This certainly must have been a ludicrous performance ; Macklin used to say, ‘The audience could scarce refrain from laughing, although Foote perfectly knew what the author meant.’ His next efforts, Lord Foppington, Cibber’s great part, and Pierre in ‘*Venice Preserved*,’ were scarcely more fortunate. His appearance, alone, would have rendered him totally unsuitable for such characters : his stature was short and inclined to stoutness ; his face was round, full, and flat ; his nose broad and coarse ; these

faults, however, were partly redeemed by a pleasant mouth, and sparkling eyes full of humour.

After these fruitless efforts, he turned his attention to a more suitable line of character, although he occasionally essayed genteel comedy ; and even as late as 1758 appeared for his benefit, at Drury Lane, as Shylock, with Kitty Clive for Portia ; and neither of them intended it for burlesque ! But, with that strange desire to be something we are not, nearly all our great comedians have started as aspirants to tragic honours. Foote, however, must have possessed some merits, although Davies pronounces him to have been despicable in all parts save those of his own writing, as we find him engaged the winter after his Haymarket *début* at Drury Lane, and playing such characters as Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's 'Constant Couple,'—with Peg Woffington, the Sir Harry, in the piece—and Bayes in 'The Rehearsal.' As we have before seen, it was customary to imitate the styles of the best-known actors in this part, but Foote carried the license still further ; for not only did he mimic the peculiarities of actors, but those of statesmen, doctors, lawyers, or any persons whom the public would recognise or laugh at. It was the success of this performance that induced him, in 1747, to open the Haymarket Theatre with a piece of his own writing, entitled 'The Diversions of the Morning.' The house was crammed. The 'Diversions' consisted of the old imitations introduced into 'The Rehearsal,' and some new ones. A selection from Congreve's 'Old Bachelor' got him into hot water. The theatre was not licensed, and the actors of the patent houses called upon the Westminster magistrates to interfere : so on the second night the constables entered and dispersed the audience.

But Foote was not to be so easily put down : on the very next morning he issued another announcement in the *General Advertiser* : 'On Saturday afternoon, exactly at twelve o'clock, at the new theatre in the Haymarket, Mr. Foote begs the favour of his friends to come and drink a dish of chocolate

with him ; and 'tis hoped there will be a great deal of comedy and some joyous spirits ; he will endeavour to make the morning as diverting as possible. Tickets to be had for this entertainment at George's Coffee Houses, Temple Bar, without which no one will be admitted. N.B.—Sir Dilbury Diddle will be there, and Lady Betty Frisk has absolutely promised.' A crowded house was the result of this advertisement ; curiosity was on tiptoe to know what it meant. Foote came forward, and bowing to the audience, informed them that 'as he was training some young performers for the stage, he would, with their permission, whilst chocolate was getting ready, proceed with his instructions before them.' Under pretence of teaching these pupils, he again introduced his imitations. The authorities made no further attempt to interfere with him ; and in a few weeks he altered the time of his entertainment from morning to evening, and the title from 'Chocolate' to 'Tea.' To drink a dish of tea with Mr. Foote became the rage of the season. The actors exclaimed that his mimicry would ruin them. Upon which the wit replied that in that case it would be his duty to provide another situation for each lady and gentleman who, instead of murdering blank verse and assuming the characters of kings, queens, lords, and ladies, for which their abilities were far from being suitable, should be placed where their talents and behaviour could with more propriety be employed. Quin he appointed, on account of his deep voice and ponderous manner, to be a watchman ; Delane, who had a whining delivery, was to be a beggar ; Ryan, who was noted for a shrill voice and monotonous tone, an itinerant razor-grinder ; Peg Woffington, an orange girl, etc. Finding that every move they made against him only ended in defeat and further ridicule, the actors at length, in sheer despair, let him take his course unmolested. The year afterwards he appeared in a similar entertainment, which he called 'An Auction of Pictures.' New characters were introduced—notably Sir Thomas de Veil, a Westminster justice ; Mr.

Cock, a celebrated auctioneer; and the notorious Orator Henley. This piece was a satire upon one of the fashionable manias of the day—the rage for antique coins, antique sculptures, old masters, old china, etc.—which rendered the auction-room a morning lounge *à la mode*. ‘The Knights’ followed, and was the first piece printed. To this comedy was added a ‘Cat Concert,’ as a burlesque upon the Italian opera; for which he engaged a man so celebrated for his imitations of grimalkin that he was called Cat-Harris. One morning, when he did not come to rehearsal, Foote sent Shuter to seek him; he lived in a court in the Minories, and the messenger, not being certain of the house, commenced a cat solo. Presently a man thrust his head out of a window, and answered in the same enchanting strain. ‘You are the fellow I want,’ cried Shuter. ‘Come along; we can’t begin the cat piece without you.’

Foote had already spent two fortunes, and a third was about this time left him by a relation of his mother’s. He again set up a carriage; and to celebrate this third acquisition, emblazoned upon its panels the motto, ‘Iterum, iterum, iterumque.’ He now recommenced his old course of extravagance, and between 1749 and 1752 passed the greater portion of his time in Paris. In the latter year he presented Garrick with his comedy of ‘Taste,’ the profits of which were given to Worsdale, a poor painter. The satire of the comedy is very pungent. It turns upon the tricks and humbug of portrait painters and their sitters; upon a fashionable auctioneer, who employs a fellow he has found painting sign-boards, to manufacture old-masters. A ‘Susanna,’ not worth £20, becomes, by the addition of a little lumber-room dirt and the application of the spaltham pot, a Guido, worth £150.

By the close of 1753, Foote had squandered his third fortune, and made his re-entrance upon the stage in the character of Buck, in his own farce of ‘The Englishman in Paris.’ This was followed by ‘The Englishman Returned

from Paris.' In these farces we have the original of the frog-eating, grimacing, dancing, irascible, ridiculous creature which, until within these twenty or thirty years, was the popular English idea of a Frenchman. Foote's next venture for fame and money was less excusable. It was the burlesque lectures upon Macklin, which have been already described in a previous chapter. In five nights Foote realised about £500 by the caricature, while soon afterwards poor Macklin was gazetted in the Bankruptcy Court. In February, 1757, he produced his celebrated comedy of 'The Author.' The condition of authorship is excellently, but not ill-naturedly, satirised in the character of Vamp and his publisher Cape. But the most famous personage of the comedy is Mr. Cadwallader, which was played by Foote himself. His 'make-up' was so wonderful, that on the first night the audience did not recognise him. Enormously corpulent, a broad unmeaning stare upon his face, an awkward gait, a loud voice, an incoherent way of speaking, his head moving restlessly towards his left shoulder, his mouth gaping with unuttered things, and a trick of sucking his wrist. The original of this caricature, a Mr. Ap-Rice, a Welsh gentleman with whom the mimic was on intimate terms, was in the boxes, vastly enjoying the acting, without for a moment dreaming that the fun applied to himself. This unconsciousness, however, was of short duration; for from that time he could never enter a coffee-house, or be seen in any public place, without pointings and whisperings, and 'There's Cadwallader!' or some one crying after him, 'This is Becky, my dear Becky!' a phrase frequently repeated in the play. At length Mr. Ap-Rice solicited and obtained the protection of the Lord Chamberlain; and on the night of Foote's benefit, the same on which he and Kitty Clive appeared as Shylock and Portia, an order came down for the suppression of the piece.

In the meantime he continued to sustain various parts in the old comedies, in addition to those written by himself,

and was once advertised to play Polonius, but he thought better of it before night came. At the end of the season he went over to Ireland. The following passage from a letter written from Dublin, and published in a number of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for 1775, relates a curious anecdote, and shows Foote in a new character:

'I suppose you have heard of the famous comedian, Mr. Foote. He is in this town at this time, and is a man of much humour. He took into his head to take a lodgings in a remote part of the town in order to set up the lucrative business of fortune-telling. After he had got his room hung with black, and his dark lantern, together with such people about him as knew the people of fashion in this great city, he gave out handbills to let them know that there was a man to be met with at such a place who wrote down people's fortunes without asking them any questions. As his room was quite dark, the light from his lantern excepted, he was in less danger of being discovered, so that he carried on the deception with great success for many days; insomuch that he is said to have cleared £30 a day, at 2s. 6d. a head.'

From Dublin he migrated to Edinburgh, and thence back to the Irish capital, where he was received in the best society, even at the table of the Lord-Lieutenant, and made a large sum of money.

It was at this period that he produced his first draft of 'The Minor,' the satire of which was directed against Whitefield and his followers. But whether it was that dissent had gained too strong a footing in Dublin, or that the audience failed to catch its wit, the piece failed. 'The Minor,' re-written, was produced at Drury Lane with prodigious success, crowds besieging the doors nightly. Two new characters were added, and an Epilogue spoken by Doctor Squintem, in which every peculiarity of Whitefield's was exactly reproduced. This comedy is, perhaps, his best work. It brought forth an angry pamphlet from one of the preacher's friends, to which Foote wrote a reply, among the

cleverest emanations of his pen ; it was at once satirical and argumentative, and an excellent defence of his profession.

The following summer, in conjunction with Murphy, he opened Drury Lane for a short season, the principal event of which was the production of ‘The Liar ;’ the plot, taken from the Spanish, had already been used by Corneille in ‘*Le Menteur*,’ and by Steele in his ‘*Lying Lover*.’ This comedy, a few years back, formed the principal attraction at the Olympic for more than one hundred nights. It was followed by ‘*The Orators*,’ produced at the time that Sheridan was delivering his lectures upon oratory, in which the popular mania for public speaking, and debating societies, especially one called the ‘*Robin Hood*,’ were excellently satirised ; again he introduced the griping publisher and ground-down literary hack. It has been suggested, and with much probability, that poor Goldsmith sat for the latter portrait. But the sensation of the piece was the introduction of a noted printer, publisher, and alderman of Dublin, one-legged George Faulkener, whose physical misfortune, conceit and eccentricities were caricatured under the name of Peter Paragraph. Lord Chesterfield maliciously advised him to take law proceedings against his libeller, never thinking, however, that he would follow his counsel ; in this he was mistaken, for Faulkener did commence an action. Two months afterwards the incorrigible mimic introduced a new scene into the comedy, in which he caricatured counsel, judge, and jury, and all the proceedings of the trial, and performed it at the Haymarket. In his next piece, ‘*The Mayor of Garratt*,’ he flew at higher game, and, as Matthew Mug, held up to public laughter the peculiarities of the Duke of Newcastle. It was of this nobleman he said, that he always appeared as if he had lost an hour in the morning and was looking for it all day. To keep this patrician company, he pilloried a certain justice of the peace, fish-salesman, and ex-militia officer, as Major Sturgeon. The whole comedy is overflowing with wit and humour, and one of its

characters, Jerry Sneak, has become the type of the hen-pecked husband. In 'The Patron,' the notorious Bubl Doddington was introduced under the name of Sir Thomas Softy. In 'The Commissary,' the army contractors, rich vulgarians who had made their wealth out of the Seven Years' War, came under the lash. Not so justifiable, however, was a satire upon Dr. Arne, the composer, who figured in it as Dr. Catgut.

Success attended all these productions, and no man gave better dinners than Foote, had choicer wines upon his table, or drove finer horses; no man was more courted or better received in good society. When the Duke of York returned from the Continent, a contemporary says, 'he went first to his mother's, then to his Majesty's, and directly from them to Mr. Foote's.' It was about this time that he met with the unfortunate accident by which he lost a limb. While on a visit at Lord Mexborough's, urged on by the Duke of York for a joke, and by his own vanity, he followed the hunt upon a blood horse; scarcely had he started ere the animal threw him; the fall fractured one of his legs in two places, compelling amputation. Even while the operation was being performed, the incorrigible wit made jests upon his loss. 'I shall now be able to imitate George Faulkner to the life,' he said. But, however lightly he appeared to treat this misfortune it cast a bitterness over the rest of his life. O'Keefe says it was pitiable to see him leaning against the wall of his stage dressing-room, while his servant dressed his cork leg to suit the character in which his master was to appear. He looked sorrowful; but instantly resuming his high comic humour and mirth, he hobbled forward, entered the scene, and gave the audience what they expected, their plenty of laughter and delight. But after all, the accident was not an unalloyed evil, as in consideration of the share he had in it, the Duke of York obtained from the King a patent, by which Foote was legally permitted to keep open the Haymarket Theatre between the 14th of May and the

14th of September, which patent expired at his death. He thereupon rebuilt the house, gave it a handsome frontage, and commenced his season in May, 1767, with a burlesque entitled ‘The Tailors, a Tragedy for Warm Weather.’ The MS. of this play had been sent anonymously to Dodsley’s shop, with an unsigned note offering the free use of it ; and, strange to say, although the piece obtained a great success and kept the stage for half a century, the authorship was never avowed, and still remains a mystery. The satire of the burlesque appears to have given great umbrage to the craft. When, years afterwards, in 1805, Dowton announced its revival for his benefit, the indignation of the knights of the needle was so furious that they held a meeting and vowed to oppose it with might and main ; menacing letters were written to the *bénéficiaire* informing him that seventeen thousand tailors would attend to hiss and hoot the play. One, who signed himself ‘DEATH,’ wrote to inform one of the proprietors of the theatre that ten thousand more could be there if necessary. In defiance of these doughty threats, however, the bill was unchanged. But when the night came it was soon discovered that the brotherhood meant deeds as well as words. In the gallery they contrived to secure every seat except two, and to monopolise nearly every other part of the house. Dowton’s appearance was the signal for the uproar to begin ; a pair of shears was thrown at him ; he offered twenty pounds reward to any person who would point out the offender, but no one would betray him. Finding the audience would not listen to a word, Dowton offered to change the piece to ‘The Village Lawyer,’ but the riot had assumed proportions too formidable to be appeased, and the uproar within was sustained by a mob of tailors without. A magistrate was sent for, special constables called out ; but they were helpless against the numbers of the rioters, and the disturbance continued to increase until the arrival of a troop of Life Guards, who seized sixteen and put the remainder to flight.

With 'The Tailors' was produced his celebrated 'Devil on Two Sticks.' It was now the medical profession that was the object of his attack. As the President of the College of Physicians, he brought the celebrated Sir William Brown upon the stage ; the make-up was complete—wig, coat, eye-glass, gait—all but one special feature, the doctor carried a muff, a circumstance which Foote seems to have forgotten. One night Sir William came to see his imitation, remarked the omission, sent him his own muff the next morning with a polite letter, begging his acceptance of the same in order to render the figure perfect. By this comedy Foote realised between three and four thousand pounds. At the end of the season he went over to Dublin. Staying at Bath on the road, he fell in with some card-sharpers, to whom he lost five hundred pounds in ready money, together with twelve hundred he had deposited in the bank, and landed in Ireland almost penniless. But his usual good-luck still stood by him. The 'Devil on Two Sticks' was almost as great a success in the Irish capital as it had been in the English. His next piece was 'The Maid of Bath,' in which he severely satirised the vices and follies of Bath society. In 'The Lame Lover' he did battle against the trickeries of the law, and in the title *rôle* raised a laugh against himself. In 'The Nabob,' he made an onslaught on those Anglo-Indians who, about this time, were making large fortunes by very doubtful means, and upon the corruption of the rotten boroughs. 'The Christian Club' wait upon Sir Matthew Mite to offer him the nomination of the members for the borough. The Club had taken that name 'because,' explains one, 'from strict union and brotherly kindness we hang together like the primitive Christians, we have all things in common.' That is to say, they equally divide all the bribes. 'Why, I remember,' says one, 'at the election some time ago, when I took up my freedom, I could get but thirty guineas for a new pair of jack boots ; while Tom Ramskin over the way had a fifty-pound-note for a pair of washleather breeches.'

Sir Matthew asks their terms. ‘Why, we could not have afforded you one under three thousand at least ; but as your honour has a mind to deal in the gross, we shall charge you but five for the both.’ As they are leaving the house, the speaker’s eyes fall upon one of the black servants, whom he offers to make a member of the corporation of Bribe’em. ‘Why, you would not submit to accept of a negro?’ cries the Nabob. ‘Our present members, for aught we know, may be of the same complexion, your honour,’ is the reply : ‘for we have never set eyes on them yet.’ ‘But you could not think of electing a black?’ persists Mite. ‘That makes no difference to us : the Christian Club has ever been persuaded that a good candidate, like a good horse, can’t be of a bad colour.’ A characteristic anecdote of Foote is told in connection with this piece. Two gentlemen recently returned from the East Indies, believing themselves pointed at in the character of Matthew Mite, bought two cudgels, and one night waited upon Foote at his lodgings in Suffolk Street, resolved to inflict condign punishment upon him there and then. He received them in his drawing-room with a politeness so marked that their hostile intentions melted into remonstrances, which he interrupted with a request that they would take coffee before they opened their business. This they refused ; and expostulated upon the insults which persons of character and fortune had sustained from his licentious pen. Foote assured them, in the most solemn manner, that he had no particular person in view, and that he intended to satirise only the *unworthy* part of the nabob gentry. The end of the business was that they remained chatting amicably until four in the morning, and dined there the same day. From that time forth none were louder in their praises o’ his wit, politeness, and hospitality ; they attended the theatre every night during the run of the piece, and applauded it as heartily as anyone there. Sentimental comedy and romances of the Pamela School were burlesqued in ‘Piety in Pattens, or the Handsome House-

maid,' played by puppets, because, he stated, with a cut at the actors of the period, the players were incapable. In this he also held up to ridicule the Stratford Jubilee. The satire was not a success, and created at one time something approaching to a riot. When asked by a lady if the puppets were to be as large as life, he replied, 'Oh dear no, madam; not much above the size of Garrick.' 1772, a year of great commercial failures, brought forth '*The Bankrupt*' The title explains the aim of the piece, which was directed against the rogueries of trade and the deficiencies of the law for their punishment. In the same year he paid a visit to Ireland. Upon his return to London he produced '*The Cozeners*.' Fashionable preachers, sinecures, and the sale of Government places here came under his lash. In Dr. Simony we have a portrait of the notorious Dr. Dodd; and in the character of Mrs. Fleece' em, we have that of Mrs. Rudd, a smuggler, thief, milliner, match-maker, and procuress, a notorious criminal of the day. Lord Chesterfield's Letters are also admirably satirised in the person of Toby.

Misfortunes, provoked by his unsparing pen, and which embittered and shortened his last days, began to threaten him. He had openly stated that in the character of Lady Kitty Crocodile, in his new comedy of '*A Trip to Calais*', he intended to hold up to public censure the notorious Duchess of Kingston. The lady sent for him, and he offered to suppress the character for £2,000. She offered £1,600, which he refused. Friends now advised her to resist this infamous demand, and the Lord Chamberlain refused to license the piece, while she employed one Jackson,\* a hedge parson, to libel the author in newspapers and pamphlets. But Foote's impudence never deserted him, and when some one inquired of him the reason of Lord Hertford's (the Chamberlain) refusal, he replied, 'Oh, he asked me to make

\* This same Jackson, under the pseudonym of Curtius, tortured Garrick's last days by anonymous letters containing mysterious threats of exposure unless he was bribed to silence.

his youngest son a box-keeper, and I declined, so he stopped my piece.' He now prepared to publish 'The Trip to Calais,' and was again thwarted by the threat of a prosecution for libel. At length, finding himself checkmated, he offered to suppress the obnoxious scenes of the comedy, if the Duchess would put an end to the war. A contemptuous and abusive letter, in which she called him a buffoon, a merry-andrew, and a theatrical assassin, drew forth a reply which may be placed among the most poignant and admirable productions of his wit. Unable to touch his arch-enemy upon the stage, Foote resolved to scarify her tool; he remodelled 'The Trip to Calais' into 'The Capuchin,' and as Dr. Viper, gibbeted him with all the malice he could command. The battle was creating an immense sensation, and on the first night of the new comedy the theatre was packed with friends and enemies—the latter predominating, but not sufficiently to prevent its success—and it was acted throughout the season. Stung to fury by this terrible satire, Jackson carried on the fight with yet greater malignity. A riot was attempted on the next opening night, but defeated by Foote's clever tact. As a last stake, Jackson bribed a discharged coachman of Foote's to bring a hideous charge against him. Numbers who had been tortured by his cruel wit became partisans of his detractor. But, on the other hand, he had many firm and powerful friends; his theatre was nightly filled with all that was noble in rank and intellect, and the King, to testify his sympathy, commanded a performance. There was a trial; but the infamous charge completely broke down, and the jury, without a moment's hesitation, returned a verdict of 'Not Guilty.' As soon as the acquittal was pronounced, Murphy rushed away to Suffolk Street with the glad tidings, and seeing Foote at the window, waved his hat in sign of victory. When he entered the room he found him stretched upon the floor in violent hysterics.

He never recovered the blow. He let the Haymarket to

Colman for an annuity of £1,600, and certain other considerations. He reappeared in the following May in ‘The Devil on Two Sticks’; but how changed! His cheeks were lank and withered, his eyes had lost all their old intelligence, and his whole person appeared sunk and emaciated. A few hissed, but his friends and the impartial part of the audience cheered him. He rallied a little in the course of the play; but the public accepted him rather for what he had been than what he was. He appeared in three or four other characters; but towards the end of the season, while again performing in ‘The Devil on Two Sticks,’ he was seized with a paralytic stroke. After a few weeks at Brighton he slightly recovered, and in the autumn his physicians ordered him to the south of France. But he never got further than Dover, where he died on the 21st October, 1777. He was buried by torchlight in the cloisters of Westminster, where he lies undistinguished by a memorial of any kind. ‘Did you think he would be so soon gone?’ writes Johnson to Mrs. Thrale. “‘Life,’ says Falstaff, ‘is a shuttle.’ He was a fine fellow in his way, and the world is really impoverished by his sinking glories. I would have his life written with diligence.’ Such a valediction from the lips of this great and good man is sufficient to prove that Foote was not altogether the irredeemable scoundrel that he is generally painted. With all his faults he possessed much generosity of disposition. He was an excellent master to his servants, and would retain actors upon his establishment out of friendship, long after they ceased to be useful to him. During one of his visits to Dublin he was taken so ill at rehearsal that he announced himself unable to play that night. ‘Ah! sir,’ said one of the actors, ‘if you do not play we shall have no Christmas dinner.’ ‘If my playing gives you a Christmas dinner, play I will.’ And, although very ill, he kept his word. It has been already recorded how he gave the profits of ‘Taste’ to the poor painter Worsdale, who had been so badly treated by Sir Godfrey Kneller. He was always ready

to honour talent in preference to rank. During the run of the ‘Minor,’ when seats could not be found for noblemen, he contrived to secure a box for Gray and Mason. Players and authors were always to be found at his table, and not even the comfort of royalty was preferred to theirs.

No man was ever more free from toadyism : rank was no shield against his wit, which would strike as hard at a duke as at a menial. ‘Well, Foote, here I am, ready as usual to swallow all your good things,’ said the Duke of Cumberland, one night, in the green-room of the Haymarket. ‘Really, your Royal Highness must have an excellent digestion,’ replied the wit, ‘for you never bring any up again.’ A Scotch peer, notoriously thrifty, served his wine in very small glasses, and descanted eloquently upon its age and excellence. ‘It is very *little* for its age,’ observed Foote. Sometimes his humour amounted to insolence ; as, for instance, after dining at a nobleman’s house, not to his satisfaction, and finding the servants ranged in the hall when he was departing, he inquired for the cook and butler, and upon their stepping forward, said to the first, ‘Here’s half-a-crown for my eating ;’ and to the other, ‘here’s five shillings for my wine ; but by ——, I never had so bad a dinner for the money in my life.’ Dining with Lord Townshend after a duel, he suggested that his lordship might have got rid of his antagonist in a more deadly way. ‘How?’ inquired his host. ‘By inviting him to dinner,’ was the reply. The Duke of Norfolk, who was rather too fond of the bottle, asked him in what new character he should go to a masquerade. ‘Go sober,’ answered Foote. Being taken into White’s one day, a nobleman remarked to him that his handkerchief was hanging out of his pocket. ‘Thank you, my lord,’ he replied, ‘thank you ; you know the company better than I do.’ A rich contractor was holding forth upon the worthlessness of the world. ‘Can you account for it, sir?’ he asked, turning to Foote. ‘Well, not very clearly,’ he responded, ‘unless we suppose it was built by contract.’ ‘Why are you for ever

humming that air?' he asked of a gentleman who had no idea of time. 'Because it haunts me,' was the reply. 'No wonder, for you are for ever murdering it.' Garrick, of whose great fame he was undoubtedly envious, was a constant butt for his sarcasms. At one of Foote's dinner-parties an announcement was made of the arrival of Mr. Garrick's servants. 'Oh, let them wait,' he replied to his footman, 'but be sure you lock up the pantry?' One day a gentleman, while conversing with Foote, was speaking of Garrick having reflected upon some person's parsimony, and ended by observing, 'Why did he not take the beam out of his own eye before attacking the mote in other people's?' 'Because,' retorted Foote, 'he is not sure of selling the timber.' 'Where on earth can it be gone?' said Foote, when Garrick dropped a guinea at the Bedford one night, and was searching for it in vain. 'To the devil, I think,' answered the actor, irritably. 'Let you alone, David, for making a guinea go further than anyone else,' was the reply. At a dinner a young nobleman famous for profanity, when called upon for a toast, gave 'The devil?' 'Certainly, we have no objection to any of your lordship's friends,' replied Foote, coolly. Seeing written upon a pane of glass with a diamond the words, 'My Lord D — has the softest kissing lips in the world,' he added underneath:

'Then as like as two chips  
Are his head and his lips.'

He could never forego his jest, however solemn the occasion. He had been to the funeral of Holland, the actor, whose father was a baker. 'Poor fellow!' he said in the Bedford that evening, the tears scarcely dry upon his cheeks, 'I have been to see him shoved into the family oven.' He once observed of an actress, who was remarkably awkward with her arms, that she kept the Graces at arms' length. Johnson said that he considered that Foote surpassed everyone he had ever heard in humorous narrative; and that although Garrick surpassed him in gaiety, delicacy, and

elegance, Foote provoked much more laughter. He used to relate to Boswell how he first met him at a dinner. ‘Having no good opinion of the fellow,’ he said, ‘I was resolved not to be pleased. I went on eating my dinner pretty sullenly, affecting not to mind him. But the dog was so very comical, that I was obliged to lay down my knife and fork, throw myself back in my chair, and laugh it out. No, sir, he was irresistible.’

It is strange that while all the other English humourists of the eighteenth century have received such ample appreciation, the plays of Foote should be so little read. To those who would form a perfect conception of the manners of a hundred years ago, his works are invaluable ; there is not a folly, a vice, a sham of the time which they do not expose ; they are frequently coarse, but so was the age, and a true mirror must reflect what is presented to it. But their coarseness is palliated by real wit and well-written dialogue ; the characters, it is true, are too frequently caricatures founded on some physical deformity or eccentricity of manner, but they are usually typical, their humour springs out of the absurdities common to all humanity ; and if they display no very profound knowledge of the mainsprings of human nature, they are seldom unnatural, and are almost uniformly drawn with vigour.

Although Tate Wilkinson cannot be ranked among the great actors of the time, he is famous by his association with Foote, by his eccentricities, and, above all, as the author of the most amusing of all theatrical memoirs.

He was born in 1739 ; his father, Dr. John Wilkinson, chaplain of the Savoy and to Frederick, Prince of Wales, obtained a painful notoriety by an infringement of the New Marriage Act, for which he was condemned to fourteen years’ transportation. Death, however, saved him from disgrace ; and young Tate was thrown destitute upon the world. As a boy, like Foote, he had been famous among his parents’ friends for imitations of actors, and he now

became a hanger-on at the theatres, and a pupil of Rich's. Woffington, hearing that he was in the habit of mimicking her, took a great dislike to him, and made Rich promise that he would not engage him in any capacity whatever. Ned Shuter, however, took compassion on the lad's forlorn condition, and let him play a small part for his benefit. By-and-by a friend of his mother's obtained a letter of recommendation from Lord Mansfield to David Garrick: 'I marched up and down Southampton Street three or four times before I dared rap at this great man's door,' he writes, 'as fearing instant dismission might follow, or what appeared to me almost as dreadful, if graciously admitted, how should I be able to move, walk, or speak before him?' He is admitted to this august presence, and his picture of the more absurd side of Garrick's character is very amusing, though a little malicious. Mr. Garrick glanced his scrutinising eye first at me, then at the letter, and so alternately; at last—"Well, sir—hey—what, now you are a stage candidate? Well, sir, let me have a taste of your quality." I, distilled almost to jelly with my fear, attempted a speech from Richard, and another from Essex, which he encouraged by observing I was so much frightened that he could not form any judgment of my abilities, but assured me it was not a bad omen, as fear was by no means a sign of want of merit, but often the contrary. We then chatted for a few minutes, and I felt myself more easy, and requested leave to repeat a few speeches in imitation of the then principal stage representatives. "Nay now," says Garrick, "sir, you must take care of this, for I used to call myself the first at this business." I luckily began with an imitation of Foote. It is difficult here to determine whether Garrick hated or feared Foote the most: sometimes the one, sometimes the other was predominant; but, from the attention of a few minutes, his looks brightened, the glow of his countenance was transfused to mine, and he eagerly desired a repetition of the same speech. I was animated, forgot Garrick was present,

and spoke at perfect ease. "Hey—now! Now—what—all," says Garrick. "How, really this—is—is (with his usual hesitation and repetition of words)—why—well—well—well. Do call on me again on Monday at eleven, and you may depend upon every assistance in my power."

At the end of the second interview he was engaged for the ensuing season, at the modest salary of thirty shillings a week. His imagination ran riot, and he never doubted but that in the autumn he would see his name in the newspapers in large capitals—' *The part of OTHELLO, by a young gentleman?*' Alas for his hopes! His opening part was the torch-bearer to Romeo, in the last act of ' Romeo and Juliet'; and those that succeeded, gentlemen-in-waiting! His remuneration was equally disappointing, for the theatre being open only three nights in the week through the first month, reduced his salary to fifteen shillings. During a portion of the preceding summer, however, at Maidstone, in a company made up of some of the secondary actors, he had played Romeo, George Barnwell, Shore, Orestes, etc., for an average of about six shillings a week and a benefit, his profits of which amounted to one shilling and sixpence, and *two pieces of candle*. His *début*, he confesses, was in no respect a brilliant one. Worse than that, certain persons of the company whom Garrick had desired to report to him upon the behaviour of the tyro, reported unfavourably.

One day, just before he was starting to fulfil a Dublin engagement, Foote was dining at Garrick's, and the conversation turned upon imitation. ' Egad,' cried David, ' there is a young fellow engaged with me who I really think is superior to either of us at mimicry. I used to think myself well at it, but I give him the preference.' ' I should like to hear him,' said Foote. Wilkinson was forthwith sent for, and so pleased the great wit that he took him away with him to Ireland. In Dublin, Tate was well received by some aristocratic friends of his family, and as the new Marriage Act was very unpopular there, he became an object of great sympathy

on account of his father's misfortunes. So great was the success of his imitations, that the elder Sheridan, who was the manager of the theatre, wrote to Garrick to obtain leave for him to remain in Dublin until the middle of February. Apropos of Sheridan, he tells a most amusing anecdote. When his benefit was being discussed, that gentleman proposed that he should give imitations of the actors and actresses then employed in the theatre. Tate demurred, urging that it would annoy them. Sheridan insisted, almost angrily, ‘the more it vexes the actors and actresses, the greater relish it will give the audience.’ At last, ‘like a fool,’ he says, ‘in my knowledge of mankind and the human heart, I proposed to imitate *him*: ‘Your rank in the theatre, and being a gentleman so well known in Dublin, on and off the stage, must naturally occasion any striking imitation of yourself to have a wonderful effect.’ Hogarth’s pencil could not testify more astonishment. He turned red and pale alternately; his lips quivered; it was some time before he could speak; he took a candle from off the table, and showing me the room door—when at last his words found utterance—said he never was so insulted. What, to be taken off by a buffoon upon his own stage! And as to mimicry, what was it? Why, a proceeding he never could countenance; that he even despised Garrick and Foote for having introduced so mean an art; and he then very politely desired me to walk downstairs.’

He returns to London with all his blushing honours thick upon him. But still he cannot propitiate ‘King David,’ by whom he is distinguished as ‘that d——d exotic.’ While passing down St. James’s Street, however, he hears his name shouted from a window. It is Foote, whom he has not met since his return from Dublin. Foote invites him to dinner, and proposes that he shall play a part in the new farce, which he is about to produce at Drury Lane, entitled ‘Diversions of the Morning.’ Tate is doubtful of ‘King David’s’ permission: “‘You must plainly see,” says his

host, "that that dirty hound Garrick" (this was Foote's usual way of speaking of his good friend) "does not mean to do you any service. I know his heart so well, that if you give me permission to ask for your first attempt upon his stage, and to be in my piece, the hound will refuse the moment I mention it; and though his little soul would rejoice to act 'Richard the Third' in the dog-days before the hottest kitchen fire for a sop in the pan, yet I know his mean soul so perfectly, that if on his refusal I, with a grave face, tell him I have his figure exactly made and dressed as a puppet in my closet ready for public admiration, the fellow will not only consent to your acting, but what is more extraordinary, will lend me money, if I should say I want it."

It is needless to point out the malice of this description to those who have read the chapter on Garrick. Nevertheless, Foote did gain his point, and Wilkinson appeared in the farce, with, he tells us, prodigious success. Some imitations of the Covent Garden actors, which he introduced, called forth so earnest a remonstrance from the sufferers, that Garrick interfered and forbade them for the future. But these had so delighted the audience that upon their omission on the second night, the whole house so clamorously demanded them that the manager was obliged to give way. "Hey, why now, as they insist," says Garrick, "I do not see that I am bound to run the hazard of a riot in my theatre to please the Covent Garden people; and if they are not satisfied with your serving up Mr. Foote as a dish, why, it is a pity you could not give me; but that you say is not possible with any hope of success. Why—now—haste, they are making a devilish noise; and as you have begun your taking off, why go on with it, and do what comes into your head, and do not in future plague me with your cursed tricks again." Wilkinson took him at his word, and imitated him in three of his favourite parts. From that time the imitations went on nightly. But while Wilkinson won only applause and 30s. a week, Foote reaped a golden harvest.

He now made overtures to Rich. ‘Well, Muster William-skin, you are much improved since I began to larn you. I think I must engage you: name your own terms,’ said the eccentric manager. Terms were arranged, and Wilkinson proposed to appear in Foote’s ‘Minor,’ in which the author, with whom he had recently quarrelled, had satirised him under the name of ‘Shift,’ and eager for revenge, Tate now proposed to return the compliment. No man was more sensitive to ridicule than Foote, who ridiculed everybody, and upon hearing of this intention, he immediately sought out Rich, and with many more expletives than I transcribe, thus addressed him: “‘You old hound, if you dare let that pug-nosed Wilkinson take any liberty with me as to mimicry, I will bring you yourself, Rich, on the stage. And if he dares to appear in my character in ‘The Minor,’ I will instantly produce your old stupid, ridiculous self, with your three cats, and your hound of a mimic altogether, next week at Drury Lane, for the general diversion of the pit, boxes, and galleries, and that will be payng you, you squinting old Hecate, too great a compliment.’” After Foote had departed, denouncing vengeance on him and his cats, Rich, with a most woeful countenance, met Mr. Sparks, one of his actors, ‘Why, Muster Sparklish,’ he said, ‘Muster Footseye has been here, and he says if I let Muster Williamskin act his parts upon the stage, he will write parts for me, my cat, and Muster Williamskin, and bring us all upon the stage; so we musn’t act what we intended.’ After much persuasion, however, the manager consented to brave ‘Mr. Footseye’s’ wrath; ‘but he was still frightened,’ adds Tate, ‘and I believe dreaded an affront on his favourite cat more than on himself.’ So great was his success that Rich offered him £6 a week, benefits, and an engagement for three years; but Tate loved ‘to be free as air,’ and refused to bind himself. The fact was that, accustomed to be the star of provincial towns, he could not reconcile himself to the inferior position into which he must of necessity have sunk in the great London theatre.

So after a while he went back into the country. While at Norwich his old friend Foote made him an offer to join the Haymarket company, which he accepted, and a reconciliation took place that was interrupted only with life. The Haymarket Theatre, he tells us, at that time could boast only of a few trumpery scenes, no wardrobe but such as was hired from a second-hand clothes shop in Monmouth Street, and stage properties were less known there than in the most distant rustic company that scoured the country round. At the end of the season Wilkinson again returned to the provinces. But after a time grew weary of his wandering life, and invested all his savings, some two thousand pounds, in the lease of the York, Hull, and Leeds theatres, known as the York circuit, which he conducted for upwards of thirty years with great success. Many fine actors and actresses, who afterwards became the idols of the London stage, owed their first advancement to his discrimination ; among others, Kemble, Fawcet, and the elder Matthews, Mrs. Jordan, and Mrs. Siddons. As he grew old he became as eccentric as any character that figures in his ‘Memoirs ;’ the stories related of his peculiarities would fill a volume.

I cannot forbear quoting an extraordinary monologue which the elder Mathews used to give in imitation of him. He had contracted a habit of jumbling together in one speech half a dozen different subjects, and of twisting names with a perversity worthy of old Rich. The following scene took place after he had been away on a short excursion. Upon a table in front of him lay Murphy’s ‘Life of Garrick,’ at his feet a spaniel pup, and on the table a bottle of cough-drops :

‘I hope, sir,’ says Mathews, ‘you have enjoyed your trip, and not suffered from your exertions.’ ‘Why, as to *that*, Mr. Madox,’ answers Wilkinson, ‘not but I am glad I went, for the weather was very fine ; and if it hadn’t been for the firing of the pistols I should have enjoyed it very much ; but to be sure Mrs. Siddons was all in all, not but I have a great disgust of women with black faces, it’s never a pleasing

sight—and the old women were hideous. But then her dignity was indeed wonderful ! and if you ask me what is a Queen, I should say Mrs. Siddons. Still, to come into the room where one's asleep, and run all over one's face—ugh ! —is more than any one would like to imagine ; and I have a particular horror of rats ! At the same time, when they carry fire-arms about their persons, and let them off close to your ear, all through a piece, it makes your head ache ; and I've such a cough that I can't get a moment's sleep when I'm upon my back ; and--what with Murphy's "Life of Garrick"—I really have been a great sufferer all night. I've been recommended this bottle of drops to cure me, but I've been greatly disappointed in it. It's full of blunders and shamefully incorrect. I took three drops upon a lump of sugar and it made me very sick,' and so on.

Tate Wilkinson died in 1808, and, spite of his eccentricities, universally regretted.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### SOME FAMOUS TRAGEDIANS AND COMEDIANS.

Spranger Barry—His great 'points'—Sensibility—Success—Splendid style of living—Failing health - In his latter days Mossop —His acting—Hapless fate—Anecdotes of his pomposity and impecuniosity —Reddish—A wonderful instance of the association of ideas —Ross—. The moral influence of the stage—Thomas Davies—John Henderson —His Falstaff—How Johnny Gilpin first became the rage - Henderson's powers as an actor—Anecdotes—His death and burial—Harry Woodward —Yates— His singular death— ' Gentleman ' Smith — Charles Surface—Tom King—‘A fellow of infinite jest’—Sir Peter Teazle—O'Brien—A runaway match—Ned Shuter and the Whitefieldites -Anecdotes—Royal valets—Weston—As Scrub—Baddeley and his Wife—A sandwich of bank-notes—A sad career—Moses— Baddeley's bequest—‘ Plausible Jack ’ Palmer and his diamonds— Joseph Surface—Anecdotes—Tragic death—Parsons—Dodd —Farren —Aickin—Lamash—Packer.

GARRICK's most famous rival in tragedy was Spranger Barry. The excellences of the two actors were so distinct, that in reality there were no grounds for comparison. With a

splendid figure, a handsome face, and a voice so melodious that he was called ‘silver-tongued,’ Barry was the irresistible stage lover, and in tenderness was as incomparable as Garrick was in the grand and conflicting passions of humanity. The one was as great in the heroes of comedy, as the other was in such characters as Abel Drugger and Sir John Brute. Davies says Cibber preferred Barry’s Othello even to Betterton’s and Booth’s, and was seen loudly applauding it in the boxes—a most unusual thing for the old cynic to do. So terrible was Barry in the jealous scene, that his utterance of the line ‘I’ll tear her all to pieces,’ would make the ladies scream with terror; and Bernard says in his ‘Recollections’ he could not sleep all night after witnessing this performance; while his ‘No, not much moved?’ was equally fine in its heart-rending pathos. In the apology to the Senate he was so tender, so insinuating, that when the Duke said, ‘I think this tale would win my daughter too,’ there was a round of applause, as though the whole house echoed the sentiment. In ‘The Earl of Essex,’ when, upon being taken prisoner, he pointed to his Countess lying fainting upon the ground, and exclaimed, ‘Oh, look there!’ the critics in the pit burst into tears and then shook the theatre with unbounded applause and huzzahs. He so intensely felt his parts that his powers of expression were frequently weakened in consequence, while Garrick, when producing his most terrible effects in ‘Lear,’ could in a pause thrust his tongue into his cheek and utter a jest. Such sensibility in actors, however, although it may heighten the effect at times, rather embarrasses than assists them upon the whole, since it affects the power of the judgment and that perfect mastery over the workings of the passions, which are among the essentials of great acting. The most indifferent actress will at times shed real tears in pathetic situations and fail to move an audience, while another, dry-eyed and unaffected, will by the mere perfection of art melt the very souls of the spectators.

Barry was born in Dublin in 1719, and brought up to the business of a silversmith. His first appearance upon the stage was at the Smock Alley Theatre as Othello in 1743. Like his great English rival, he met with immediate success. Glowing accounts of his abilities were brought across the Channel. Garrick pronounced him the most exquisite stage lover he had ever seen. On Macklin's introduction, Lacy engaged him for Drury Lane, where he made his *début* on the 4th October, 1746, as Othello. London was enchanted, and crowds rushed to see the new actor.

Well-connected, and a gentleman in private life, he was received in the best society and visited by the greatest people. He was called the Mark Antony of the stage, from his gay and splendid style of living. He gave entertainments to his friends that would not have shamed a princely host. He was on intimate terms with the Prime Minister, Pelham, who invited himself to sup with him. The actor had the bad taste to provide a banquet. Pelham reproved him, saying that *he* could not have done more to entertain a foreign ambassador. His fascination and powers of persuasion were as great off the stage as on, and no one could resist them. Rich gave a very striking and significant picture of his character, when he said he could wheedle a bird off a tree and squeeze it to death in his hand.

In 1758, he and Woodward built a new theatre in Dublin; the speculation turned out ruinously bad. When he returned to England he joined Foote at the Haymarket; in 1766 Garrick secured him at a salary of £1,500 a year for himself and wife. While still in the prime of life he became a martyr to gout, which broke up his constitution. When his health began to fail, Garrick generously added £200 to his salary, left him a free choice of parts, and allowed him at all times to consult his health and ease. At little more than fifty the once Apollo-like Spranger had become old and infirm. Frederick Reynolds, who, when a boy, saw him play Othello after he had lost his fine appear-

ance, gives a very unflattering description of him, and a vivid picture of the stage of the period. ‘The noble, the victorious warrior, was personated by this great actor in a full suit of gold-laced scarlet, a small cocked hat, knee-breeches, and silk stockings, conspicuously displaying a pair of gouty legs. As to his wife, then in her zenith of youth and beauty, clad in the fascinating costume of Italy, she looked as captivating as he grotesque.’ Murphy wrote ‘*The Grecian Daughter*’ to suit his failing physical powers. The play was poor stuff, but Barry made a grand performance of Evander. Yet when, in one of the scenes, he said, ‘I am now old,’ some brutes in the gallery jeered. He died in 1777, at the early age of fifty-eight, and lies with so many others of his great brethren of the stage in the cloisters at Westminster.

A rival both of Garrick and Barry, and one who believed himself superior to either, was THOMAS SHERIDAN, the father of Brinsley; he was of the old, frigid, declamatory school, good in Cato and similar parts, but by no means what he taught his son to believe him—the greatest actor of the age. He was many years manager of one of the Dublin theatres, where he was a great favourite ; but he made little impression in London. As an illustration of his egotism, it is related that he always spoke the Queen Mab speech, which belongs to Mercutio, as Romeo.

A more famous actor, although his name is less familiar, was HENRY MOSSOP. The son of an Irish clergyman, he was himself intended for the Church ; but the buskin had greater attractions for him, and in 1749 he appeared in Dublin as Zanga in ‘*The Revenge*.’ So highly was he spoken of that Garrick offered him an engagement for Drury Lane, where he appeared as Zanga in the season of 1750-51. This character, and Richard, were his finest performances. But, although he had a good figure, a splendid eye, and great power in characters of strong passion, he was a pedantic and stilted actor. His favourite attitude was struck with one hand resting upon his hip, the other extended,

from which he obtained the name of ‘the teapot.’ One of Churchill’s finest portraits in the ‘Rosciad’ is that of this heavy tragedian :

‘Mossop attach’d to military plan,  
Still kept his eye fix’d on his right-hand man ;  
Whilst the mouth measures words with seeming skill,  
The right hand labours, and the left lies still,  
For he resolved on scripture grounds to go,  
What the right doth the left hand shall not know.  
With studied impropriety of speech  
He soars beyond the hackney critics reach ;  
To epithets allots emphatic state,  
Whilst principals, ungraced, like lacqueys, wait ;  
In ways first trodden by himself excels,  
And stands alone in indeclinables,  
Conjunction, preposition, adverb, join  
To stamp new vigour on the nervous line ;  
In monosyllables his thunders roll,  
He, she, it, and, we, ye, they, frights the soul.’

Disgusted at not being able to obtain the supreme position, he left Drury Lane in 1761, went back to Ireland, and opened the Smock Alley Theatre in opposition to Barry and Woodward—a rivalry which terminated in ruin to both. Mossop, received in the best society of the Irish capital, plunged into reckless extravagance. From Garrick, whom he hated and abused for his superiority, he received considerable assistance ; but nothing could avert his doom. He returned to London almost penniless ; but was too proud to solicit an engagement, which he considered he ought to be solicited to accept. At length, one day, in 1773, having spent his last copper, he locked himself up in a miserable garret which he rented at Chelsea, refused to admit anyone, and declined all offers of food made him by a compassionate landlady. When at last the door was burst open, he was found lying upon his bed dead of starvation. Garrick came forward to save his remains the disgrace of a pauper burial, but a relative of the unhappy man, who had taken no notice of him in his troubles, refused the office, and indignantly took the task upon himself.

Many amusing anecdotes are related of Mossop's pomposity and impecuniosity. One night in a tragedy an actor, who was supposed to be lying dead upon the stage, began to cough, to the intense amusement of the audience. It was in one of Mossop's great scenes, and when the curtain fell he turned very wrathfully upon the culprit. 'I could not help it, sir : if I had not coughed I should have choked.' 'Sir,' replied the grand tragedian with lofty disdain, 'you should have choked a thousand times rather than have spoiled my scene!' The following story is one of many of the period of his Dublin management.

'The Distressed Mother' was to be acted—Orestes, Mr. Mossop ; Andromache, Mrs. Burden. The salaries had not been paid for several weeks, and she was in the true character of a *distressed* woman. It was very difficult to gain admittance to him except on Sunday, and on that grand levée day performers and tradesmen were too menial to be admitted. But with the desperation of a heroine Mrs. Burden burst in upon him, prostrated herself at his feet, and cried in tragic tones, 'Oh, sir, for God's sake assist me ! I have not bread to eat, I am actually starving, and shall be turned into the streets.' *Mossop (in state).*—'Wo-man!—you have £5 per week, wo-man?' *Mrs. Burden.*—'True, sir, but I have been in Dublin six months, and in all that time I have received only £6. I call every Saturday at the office for my salary, but "No money" is the answer. How can I play Andromache, the Trojan Queen, without black satin shoes?' *Mossop.*—'Woman, begone ! I insist on your having black satin shoes for Androm-a-che.'

He did not always succeed in evading the demands of his unfortunate actors. In the last scene of 'Lear' the old king dies in Kent's arms. One night the actor who played the earl, just as Mossop was in his dying agonies, whispered in his ear, 'If you don't give me your word of honour you'll pay my arrears of salary to-night, I'll let you drop.' 'Don't talk to me now, villain!' growled the tragedian. 'Promise,

or I'll let you drop, I will—I will ; and he began to suit the action to the word, until fear of the threatened *contreséans* compelled the manager to whisper the required pledge ; which, to his credit be it said, he honourably kept.

When Tate Wilkinson gave at Drury Lane those imitations of the Covent Garden actors which were described in the last chapter, Garrick considered it his duty to administer a severe reprimand to the offender in the presence of the entire company, who very heartily joined in the snubbing. ‘When the others had finished,’ to quote the mimic’s own words, ‘Mr. Mossop, the turkey-cock of the stage, with slow and haughty steps, all erect, his gills all swelling, eyes disdainful, and hand upon his sword, breathing as if his respiration was honour, and, like the turkey, almost bursting with pride, began with much *hauteur*, “Mr. Wilkinson, phew !” (as breathing grand)—“Sir—Mr. Wil-kin-son, sir, I say—phew—how dare you, sir, make free in a public theatre, or even in a private party, with your superiors ? If you were to take such a liberty with me, *sir*, I would draw my sword and run it through your bo-dy, sir ! You should not live, sir !” and with the greatest pomp and grandeur made his departure.’ This speech and the exit upset the gravity of everyone, even of Garrick, and brought all scolding to an end with an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

This was not the last time that Wilkinson’s safety was threatened by this ‘Pistolian fire-eater.’ Some years afterwards, during his management of the Dublin theatre, Mossop made him a liberal offer to join his company, which Tate, being already engaged to Barry at the other house, was obliged to decline. Upon leaving Macklin’s residence, where the negotiations had taken place, ‘Mr. Mossop rose up suddenly and said : “Sir, I wish to attend you.” On crossing the channels, which were very dirty, he offered me his hand very politely, then suddenly walked on for the space of five or six minutes, when, after a tragic ejaculation, he stopped and said, “Sir, Mr. Wil-kin-son ! how do you dare to live, sir ?” “Why,

sir, I do not think it strange my daring, but liking to live, having such plentiful tables where I am daily made welcome in Dublin with such a number of respectable friends." "Sir," said Mossop, "you are going to play in Crow Street Theatre with Barry, sir ; and, sir, I will run you through the bo-dy, sir, if you take the liberty to attempt my manner by any mimicry on the stage. You must promise me, sir, on your honour you will not dare attempt it ; if you break that promise, sir, you cannot live ; and you, Mr. Wil-kin-son, must die, as you must meet me next day, and I shall kill you, sir." Tate answered him very coolly, that if he insisted upon such a serious termination to the dispute, it would be his wish to have an affair of honour with him in preference to any other gentleman, as if he were fortunate it would deter many from being impudent, and if he fell in battle it must be with *éclat*, as it would be by the hand of so celebrated a tragedian. This reply somewhat staggered the challenger, who had expected to inspire fear by his terrible threats : 'At last he spoke the following words : " You dare not take me off, sir ; or if you do, dare not take me off more than a lit-tle ; if you do more, sir, you shall die ! "'

REDDISH, an excellent actor in heavy parts, was the second husband of Canning's mother, who became an actress. His fate was a melancholy one. According to Taylor, while playing Hamlet one night at Covent Garden, the Laertes awkwardly knocked off his wig in the fencing scene, and exposed a bald head to the laughter of the audience. This so preyed upon his mind that he quitted the stage, and soon afterwards became insane. Upon his partial recovery in 1779 a benefit was arranged for him, and he was to play Posthumus in 'Cymbeline,' which had been one of his best parts. He entered the green-room at night with a wandering vacant look and tottering idiotic gait ; some one congratulated him upon his reappearance. 'Yes,' he answered, 'I shall astonish you in the garden scene to-night.' 'But it is Posthumus, not Romeo, you are going to

play.' 'No, sir, I play Romeo.' He had to be pushed upon the stage, and everybody expected a painful scene; but the moment he came in sight of the audience and heard the cue there was an electric change, his face lighted up, and he acted as finely as ever he had done. When he returned to the green-room, the delusion again fell upon him that he was acting Romeo. Again he had to be thrust on, and again the sound of the cue and the sight of the foot-lights restored his reason, and never once during the performance did he flag or falter. This is, perhaps, the most remarkable instance of all the many related of the extraordinary power of habit, which in the actor becomes second nature. But the poor fellow ended his days in a lunatic asylum, in the year 1785.

Ross was an actor who flourished between 1753 and 1788; he would be forgotten but for the story how his acting in George Barnwell so deeply impressed a young scapegrace, who was following in the footsteps of the London apprentice, that he withdrew from his evil courses, became a wealthy man, and every year sent his unconscious reformer a present of ten guineas as a *souvenir*. Dr. Barrowby paid Ross the compliment of saying that he had done more good by his acting than a parson by his preaching—a not uncommon occurrence. But he was careless and sleepy in his style, loved good eating and drinking better than his art, in which he never attained much eminence. He died in 1790, and is buried in St. James's, Piccadilly.

THOMAS DAVIES, whose 'Miscellanies' and 'Life of Garrick' have been so frequently quoted in these pages, was a bookseller as well as an author and actor, and it was in his house Johnson and Boswell first met. He was for some time a member of Garrick's company, but never rose to any fame as an actor.

It was generally considered by contemporaries that, at his retirement, Garrick's mantle descended upon JOHN HENDERSON. He was the son of a respectable Cheapside

tradesman, but was left fatherless at an early age, and having some artistic talent, his mother thought of apprenticing him to a silversmith ; but he joined a spouting club at Islington, won great applause by his recitations, frequented the theatres, sometimes met Garrick at a bookseller's shop, the owner of which was a friend of young John's and of the Roscius, saw with wondering longings the court and deference paid to the great actor—and resolved to take to the stage. Garrick heard him recite, but was not struck with his abilities. Soon afterwards he obtained an engagement at Bath, some say through Garrick's recommendation. On October 6th, 1772, the play-bills in that city announced that Hamlet would be performed 'by a Young Gentleman.' On October 21st, he appeared as Richard the Third, under the name of Courtney. Before the end of the year he resumed his proper name, and soon established himself as a favourite actor in the leading parts of tragedy and comedy. During a residence in Bath, Cumberland, the dramatist, saw him act, and warmly recommended him to the great manager. David sent down his brother George to take opinion upon Henderson's merits, and received so unfavourable a report, that although the engagement was regarded to be as good as settled, Garrick, who was just then retiring, made no mention of the new performer to his successor. In 1777, Colman engaged him for the Haymarket, where he made a great hit as Shylock, Hamlet, Falstaff, drawing into the little theatre in about a month between four and five thousand pounds. Mortified at the mistake he had made, Garrick ungenerously refused to recognise his abilities, and when he went to see him as Shylock said nothing in his dispraise, but was emphatic in his commendation of *the Tuba!*. His Falstaff was said to have been an extraordinary performance, only to be compared with Quin's, to which it was even superior in the scenes of riotous mirth. The next season Sheridan engaged him for Drury Lane, where he firmly established himself in public favour. During one

Lent, he gave readings with the elder Sheridan at the Freemasons' Hall. He was a most exquisite reader, and would recite the pathetic stories from 'Tristram Shandy' and the 'Sentimental Journey,' with a simple pathos that never failed to draw tears. Among his selections was Cowper's 'Johnny Gilpin,' which, although three years had elapsed since its publication, was still little known, but he gave the poem with such *verve* and drollery that it at once became the rage. 'He broke the people's hearts with the story of "Le Fèvre,"' writes Tom Dibdin, 'and then nearly killed them over again with laughing at "Johnny Gilpin."'

Boaden says that his acting was analytic and artistic, but that he was careless in dressing, and his Lear always reminded the audience of his Falstaff. Ireland speaks highly of his Macbeth in the murder scene: 'I think the countenance of horror and remorse he assumed was equal to anything I have ever seen.' But he found fault with the other portions. Kemble considered his Shylock was the greatest effort he had ever witnessed upon the stage, and the elder Macready preferred his Hamlet to that of Kemble.

He was professedly of the Garrick school. In private life he was in every respect a gentleman. In figure he was short and ungraceful, with features not at all expressive; his voice too was neither powerful nor tender, Garrick called it 'woolly.' Extravagantly praised and harshly criticised by his contemporaries, it is difficult to form a just estimate of his powers; by many he was pronounced to be little, if at all, inferior to Garrick; but this was only the prejudice of friendship and of a clique. Henderson was an actor of uncommon ability, an admirable mimic, the delight of society by his brilliant wit and genial humour; but when compared with Garrick he was only what the moon is to the sun.

Cumberland praises his private character, of which the one blot was an irresistible covetousness for money. He relates how, although he wrote a play expressly for his benefit night, Henderson took the guineas he offered him for his

seats in the theatre, exclaiming, ‘If I were not the most covetous dog in the world I should not take your money, but I cannot help it.’ Yet had not his career been prematurely closed, in 1785, Kemble would have had a harder battle to fight for supremacy. He was only thirty-eight when he died of an opiate administered in mistake. So highly was he esteemed, that burial was granted to his remains in Westminster Abbey, where he lies close to Garrick.

Turn we now from Tragedy to Comedy. One of the finest comedians of the last century was HARRY WOODWARD, the inimitable Mercutio, Bobadil, Touchstone, Marplot, Captain Absolute, Copper Captain, mimic and speaking harlequin, who made his first appearance when quite a boy, in 1730, as Rich’s pupil, at Covent Garden. He was born in 1717. His father was a tallow-chandler in Southwark, and Woodward was educated at Merchant Taylor’s school. Leaving Rich, in 1738, he went over to Drury Lane, where he became a supreme favourite. Davies tells us that his face was of a serious cast; but the moment he opened his mouth upon the stage, a certain ludicrous air laid hold of his features, and every muscle ranged itself on the side of levity. The very tone of his voice inspired comic ideas. Although Clive was admirable as Katherine in ‘Taming the Shrew,’ she seemed to be overborne by the extravagant and triumphant grotesqueness of Woodward’s Petruchio, and to be as much overawed by his manner of acting as the lady is supposed to be in the play. So naturally graceful was he, that it was said he could not even assume an awkward attitude. He made his last appearance at Covent Garden in 1777, and died in the same year.

YATES was almost as famous for longevity as Macklin. We find him an established actor in Giffard’s company when Garrick made his first appearance; yet he survived until 1796, being then in his ninety-seventh year. And he might

have lived even longer but for his irascible temper. His favourite dish was stewed eels ; one morning his house-keeper failed to procure any ; Yates fell into a furious passion and drove her out to scour the market ; when she returned with the fish she found him dead. Davies considered him to be one of the first comedians of his time. Like Woodward he was a famous speaking harlequin, he was equally admirable in the Shakespearian clowns, and in all characters of low humour. He was so conscientious an actor that he was seldom known to resort to gag or trickery for applause. His style was grave and apparently founded upon that of Dogget. He was the original Sir Oliver Surface.

'SMITH, the genteel, the airy, and the smart,' as Churchill styles him, was a famous light comedian and an indifferent tragedian ; he would be little remembered now had he not been the original Charles Surface, for Sheridan's brilliant comedy seems to have given a species of immortality to all its first representatives. Although only the son of a wholesale grocer in the city, he was sent to Eton and afterwards to Cambridge. But he quitted College rather hastily to avoid expulsion, on account of some insult offered to one of the proctors, came up to London, turned his thoughts to the stage, took lessons of Spranger Barry, and made his first appearance at Covent Garden on January 1st, 1753, as Theodosius, in Lee's tragedy of that name. And at Covent Garden he remained—only twice accepting a provincial engagement, once at Bristol and once at Dublin—until 1774, when he went to Drury Lane. There he had the honour of occasionally alternating Richard and Hamlet with Garrick. 'My utmost ambition, as an actor, was to be thought worthy to hold up his train. I can never speak of him but with idolatry,' he used to say, when referring to that time. He was Mrs. Siddons' first Macbeth, in London. Boaden says, he had but one manner for tragedy, whether he was playing Richard or Hamlet. But his *verve* and

gentlemanly bearing carried him through a world of emotion without exciting a tear, and you were some way satisfied, though not much moved. He seems to have belonged rather to the pre-Garrick school than to have imitated the great master. In comedy he was altogether admirable ; favoured with a fine figure, a handsome face, the air of a gentleman, he was full of dash, gallantry, and manliness. He boasted that during all his stage career he never blackened his face, never played in a farce, and never ascended through a trap-door. His first wife, whom he married soon after taking to the stage, was a daughter of Lord Hinchbrook ; she died in 1762, and he afterwards married a widow of large fortune. He took leave of his profession as Charles Surface, in 1788, being then fifty-eight years of age, and retired to Bury St. Edmunds, there to enjoy his favourite pursuits of fox-hunting and racing. In 1798, he reappeared as Charles, for King's benefit, and although ten years had elapsed since his last appearance before the public, he was greeted with unbounded applause. In the last act of the play *Lady Teazle* happening to drop her fan, there was a race among the actors to pick it up, but Smith, although then nearly seventy years of age, got the start of them all, and delivered it to her with an elegance that brought down a hearty round of applause. He died at Bury St. Edmunds, in 1813, in his eighty-third year.

Among the stars of the second magnitude there was no more famous player in Garrick's company than TOM KING. In 1747, he being then only seventeen, he was strolling with Ned Shuter among the Kentish barns. When he joined Yates's booth at Windsor, Garrick heard of him as a very promising young man, and, always on the look-out for fresh talent, he sent for him, tested his capabilities at a private rehearsal, and engaged him for two seasons at Drury Lane. There King made his first appearance in October, 1748. Being a novice, he had to play every kind of part, tragic or

comic, as it suited the convenience of the manager. For a wonder, he understood the bent of his genius, hated tragedy, and desired to confine himself entirely to comedy. This not being always possible in London, he accepted an engagement with Thomas Sheridan at Dublin, where he remained nine years, immensely popular both as an actor and a man. When he returned to London, in 1759, it was as a finished artist. He was equally admirable in old men and low comedy, and in Malvolio and Touchstone was said to have been unequalled. But it was as Lord Ogleby, in '*The Clandestine Marriage*,' that he attained his highest fame. The character was intended for Garrick, but whether from an indisposition to study, or because he could not see himself in it, he handed the part over to King. King declined it, and it was only after much persuasion he was induced to change his mind. Tate Wilkinson pronounces it to have been 'one of the most capital and highly finished performances to which any audience was ever treated.'

When Brinsley Sheridan became lessee of Drury Lane he made King his stage-manager. But it was with the shadow of power only he was invested ; he had not the authority to order the cleaning of a coat, or the addition of a yard of copper lace. Yet he held this doubtful position for several years, and until Kemble succeeded to it. He was the original Sir Peter Teazle, and although Sheridan was not satisfied with his conception, nor indeed with that of either Wroughton or Mathews, who succeeded him in the part, all contemporaries speak of it as a great performance. Not until 1802 did he take leave of the stage, and the '*School for Scandal*' was the play he chose for the occasion. His brother actors presented him with a silver cup, upon which their names were inscribed and this motto from '*Henry the Fifth*' :—'If he be not fellow with the best king, thou shalt find him the best king of good fellows.' A parting address was written for him by Cumberland, and when he withdrew for ever from the scene of his triumphs it was 'amidst the

tears and plaudits of a splendid and crowded house.' He died two years afterwards, at the age of seventy-four, and lies in St. Paul's, Covent Garden.

'His acting,' says Hazlitt, 'left a taste on the palate sharp and sweet like a quince. With an old, hard, rough, withered face, like a sour apple, puckered up into a thousand wrinkles ; with shrewd hints and tart replies ; with 'nods and becks and wreathed smiles' ; he was the real amorous, wheedling, or hasty, choleric, peremptory old gentleman in Sir Peter Teazle and Sir Anthony Absolute, and the true, that is pretended, clown in Touchstone, with Wit sprouting from his head like a pair of ass's ears, and Folly perched on his cap like the horned owl.' He was 'a fellow of infinite jest.' At Dublin, on tragedy nights, Sheridan forbade him the green-room ; but at some time of the evening he would be sure to peep in, dash in a joke, set everybody in a roar, and rush off before the solemn manager could hurl at him the vials of his wrath. He might have died the possessor of an ample fortune had it not been for his unconquerable passion for gambling, by which he is said to have lost £7,000. He had his town-house in Great Queen Street, his villa at Hampton, and kept his carriage. He was at one time part proprietor both of the Bristol and Sadler's Wells Theatres ; but, falling into the toils of an aristocratic blackleg, he was reduced to comparative poverty, and died in lodgings in Store Street, Tottenham Court Road, leaving his widow almost dependent upon the charity of friends. With the exception of that one fatal blot his character stood high as the cheerfulness and wittiest of companions and as an upright and honourable man.

WILLIAM O'BRIEN, a handsome, dashing actor of genteel comedy, in 1764, married Lady Susan Strangeways, a daughter of the Earl of Ilchester. It was a runaway match, celebrated at St. Paul's, Covent Garden ; as the happy couple quitted the church by one door the angry father entered by the other, too late to stop the ceremony.

O'Brien, however, although only the son of a Dublin dancing-master, was of a good old Irish family, and my lord, wisely making the best of the matter, took him off the stage and procured him an appointment in the West Indies. He afterwards obtained for him the post of Receiver-General of Dorsetshire, which office, we are informed by '*The Biographia Dramatica*', he still held at a very advanced age, in 1812.

Garrick pronounced NED SHUTER to be the greatest comic genius he had ever known. He was the original Old Hardcastle and Sir Anthony Absolute, Papillon in '*The Liar*,' and Justice Woodcock in '*Love in a Village*.' This great comic actor, strange to say, was a follower of Whitefield's, a constant attendant at the Tottenham Court Road Chapel, and divided his time pretty equally between drinking, playing, and praying; when drunk he could scarcely be restrained from going into the fields and preaching upon original sin and regeneration. Tate Wilkinson, who was a hanger-on upon Shuter, relates how he used to accompany him on Sunday mornings at six to the Tottenham Court Road Chapel; at ten to another Meeting House in Long Acre; at eleven back to Whitefield's Chapel; at three to some other; and in the evening to Moorfields. He was very liberal to the Whitefieldites, and it is said that Whitefield himself, although a bitter denouncer of all persons and things dramatic, on the occasion of Shuter's benefit recommended the congregation to attend the theatre for *once, on that night only*.

His first appearance was at Covent Garden in 1745, as '*The Schoolboy*', for the benefit of an actor named Chapman, and at so early an age that he was announced in the bills as '*Master Shuter*', a title repeated in those of Drury Lane a year afterwards. He died November 1st, 1776. His last performance was Falstaff, for his own benefit in the preceding May; but between the bottle and the tabernacle his faculties were nearly gone. '*He was more bewildered in his brain*,' says Wilkinson, 'by

wishing to acquire imaginary grace than by all his drinking ; like Mawworm, he believed he had a call.' In his reasonable moments he was a lively, shrewd companion, full of originality, whim, and humour ; all he said and did was his own, for it was with difficulty he could read his parts, and he could just sign his name and no more ; but he was the delight of all who knew him on or off the stage. John Taylor relates how he and his father dined and passed an evening with him at the Blue Posts Tavern in Russell Street, and how all the people in the neighbouring boxes could do nothing but listen to his comical stories and *bon-mots*. Another time they were at some gardens, where the visitors gathered round him in such crowds to hear his humorous sallies, that the waiters could not move about to serve. 'No person thought of retiring while Shuter remained, and I remember seeing him in the midst of his friends, as if he were the monarch of merriment.' He was equally a favourite with the most distinguished people in the realm. It is related that one night two of the royal princes came behind the scenes to have a chat with him. Their presence was anything but welcome on that occasion, as Shuter desired to study his part. 'By Jove,' he said suddenly, 'the prompter has got my book ; I must fetch it. Will your Royal Highness,' addressing one of his visitors, 'be so obliging as to hold my skullcap to the fire ?' 'Oh, certainly, Shuter,' replied the Prince. 'And perhaps you, your Royal Highness,' turning to the other, 'will condescend to air my breeches while I am gone ?' The second request was as cheerfully complied with as the first. Returning presently with another actor, and peeping through the key-hole, he saw his two visitors still engaged as he had left them, patiently awaiting his return.

Perhaps, however, notwithstanding Garrick's opinion, a yet more original genius of this period was THOMAS WESTON. His father was head cook to George II., and he, as a youth, had been a clerk in the royal kitchen. But he fell into

wild courses, entered the Royal Navy as a midshipman, contrived to procure his discharge, joined a strolling company, believed he had a call to tragedy, and acted Richard the Third execrably. But the next night, being induced to play Scrub in 'The Beaux Stratagem,' he put everyone into ecstasies. He earned but little money, and spent that little unwisely : laughable stories are told of the straits to which he was at times reduced : how he had to lie in bed while his only shirt was being washed ; but he had *the sleeve* of a defunct one, which he put on, and thrust that arm from under the coverlet when his landlady entered the room. At one time he was playing in Shuter and Yates's booth at Bartholomew Fair, nine times a day for a guinea ; then Foote engaged him for the Haymarket (1759), but only to fill an inferior position ; until gauging his talents, he wrote Jerry Sneak for him. The next season he was at Drury Lane : thenceforth he alternated between the two houses, and was second to no comic actor of the age. But unhappily his old habits of dissipation ruined his prospects. So hunted was he by bailiffs that at times he could enter the Haymarket only over the roofs of the adjoining houses, and ultimately he had to take up his abode there entirely and live in a state of siege. He died in 1776, the victim of habitual intemperance. A contemporary bestows upon him the high eulogy that he seldom outstripped the modesty of Nature, and absolutely forgot his own identity in every part he personated. In Abel Drugger he was considered superior even to Garrick, and so delighted was the great manager with his performance of that character that he presented him with a £20 note. He was a great favourite of Lichtenberg's, whose pictures of his acting are as graphic as anything in Cibber. 'When he appears, one's first idea is that some passer-by has lost his way and wandered on to the stage : his dress is so natural and his whole air so unconscious. This of itself shows no common mind. You see by what I have said that Weston is spoiled for a chame-

leon. In him the fox is all in all: Nature, which, on the one hand, appears to have destined him to excite laughter, seems on the other to have denied him the capacity of laughing himself. He is habitually grave, never goes beyond a smile, and that rarely; and it takes a long time before a smile spreads over his whole face. I have seen it do so once, when a pretty chambermaid, wanting to gain him for her mistress's plans, pats his cheek. His face lighted up slowly, but at last to such an extent as to display at least a couple of dozen teeth, most of them no trifles. Not a mouth in the house but relaxed into a laugh or smile, after its special fashion.' The same critic then goes on to give a description of Garrick's and his acting in *Archer and Scrub*, in the *Beaux Stratagem*. The former is disguised as a fashionable footman, the latter is the servant of all work of a country-house, who on Monday drives the coach, on Tuesday the plough, on Wednesday follows the hounds, on Thursday duns the tenants, on Friday goes to market, on Saturday draws the warrants, and on Sunday the beer. 'With fallen chin in a kind of adoration, he follows every movement of Garrick with his eyes. Archer, who wants Scrub to aid him in his schemes, soon grows condescending. They sit down together. With the easy grace peculiar to him, Garrick throws himself into a chair, rests his right arm upon the back of Weston's seat, and leans forward for a little confidential chat. The skirts of his splendid livery hang down gracefully, and in the folds of the coat and the person of the man, one line of beauty succeeds another. Weston sits on the middle of his chair, as beseems him, but somewhat far forward, a hand on either knee. He seems dumbfounded, and his cunning eyes are fixed on Garrick. If anything is expressed on his face, it is the affectation of dignity struggling with the paralysing sense of the horrible contrast between him and his companion. I here remarked a bit of business by Weston which produced a capital effect. Whilst Garrick lolls easily in his chair, Weston, with stiffened

back, tries by degrees to out-top him, partly from feelings of respect, but partly, too, that he may now and then steal a comparison when Garrick is not looking him in the face. When Archer, at length, in his easy way, crosses his legs, Scrub attempts to do the same, and, at last, but not without some assistance from his hands, he happily accomplishes this feat. All this is done with eyes either fixed or looking stealthy comparison. At last, when Archer begins to stroke his splendid silk-stockinged legs, Weston almost instinctively imitates the action over his miserable red worsted stockings, but immediately after collapses in his chair, and with a feeling of humility that calls forth one's pity, quietly gathers his green apron over all. In this scene, Weston, with his natural expression of stupidity, his simple, restless looks (which gain not a little from the unaffected huskytone of his voice), almost has the advantage of Garrick, and that is saying a great deal.'

BADDELEY, the original Moses in 'The School for Scandal,' began life as a cook, in which capacity he served Lord North, and afterwards Samuel Foote, in whose service he probably first imbibed a taste for the stage. It is related that years afterwards, when the whilom servant had abandoned his apron for the sock, he, for some real or imaginary insult, challenged Foote to a duel. 'Hey, what!' exclaimed the wit, 'fight! Oh, the dog! So I have taken a spit from my kitchen fire and stuck it by his side, and now the fellow wants to stick me with it.' Not immediately, however, was the cook converted into an actor; there was an intermediate transformation, and during three years he made the grand tour of Europe as a gentleman's gentleman. Thus it was that he acquired that admirable knowledge of foreign languages which afterwards stood him in such good stead. When he returned to London he went to lodge in the house of one Mr. Snow, the King's Trumpeter. Mr. Snow had a very beautiful daughter, aged sixteen, with whom young Baddeley fell desperately in love; one fine morning they left the house together and came back man and wife. It

was just after this, in 1761, that he made his first appearance at Drury Lane, and his young bride was engaged, probably on account of her pretty face, in the same house. Never, however, was a match more disastrous ; before she was nineteen Mrs. Baddeley had become as notorious for her abandoned character as for her beauty. She ruined all her lovers by her extravagance ; high and low contended alike for her favours, and she obtained Government appointments for those who would pay for them and pocketed the money. Once a royal duke sent her a packet of £100 notes to buy flowers, and begged permission to wait upon her at tea to see what she had selected. Somehow this prince was not to her taste, and when he came she placed the notes very neatly between two slices of bread and butter and ate the costly sandwich before his eyes to show her contempt for him. Of course there was very soon a separation between husband and wife : yet in 1770 Baddeley was silly enough to fight a duel about her with George Garrick in Hyde Park. Mrs. Baddeley did not act in London after 1781, and by that time her career of infamy was pretty well played out. Tate Wilkinson tells us how she joined his company at Leeds, but so disgraced his stage by appearing in a state of intoxication that he was obliged to dismiss her. She was in the habit of taking enormous quantities of laudanum, and one night at Edinburgh, in 1784, she took an overdose and was found dead in her bed next morning. Between 1761 and 1795 Baddeley acted constantly at Drury Lane in the winter, and at the Haymarket in the summer. It was while dressing for Moses in the last-named year that he was seized with a mortal illness and died soon afterwards at his house in Store Street. He had a cottage at Moulsey, which he bequeathed to the Drury Lane Fund as a home for four poor actors ; he also left money to build them a smoking summer-house out of wood from old Drury. But after a time the cottage was sold and the proceeds were put into the fund. Another bequest of his, however, is carried out to this day : he left

£100 in the Three per Cents to purchase cake and wine, to be partaken of by the company in Drury Lane green-room annually for ever, in celebration of his memory. He was the last actor who wore the royal livery of scarlet and gold. Baddeley was particularly excellent in delineating Swiss, Germans, French, and all foreigners—his accent and manner were said to have been perfect; he had also made the Jewish character an especial study, and his Moses was inimitable. Canton, in ‘The Clandestine Marriage,’ was another of his famous parts, and he, it is said, was greatly esteemed in many characters of the older comedy, such as Brainworm and Grumio.

The remaining actors within this period can scarcely be said to have won their laurels under Garrick, though they all served their novitiate under his management, and as such, considering how completely the great actor stamped his own individuality upon his entire company, they must be numbered with the Garrick school.

First among these later disciples must be placed the name of JOHN PALMER, ‘Plausible Jack,’ as Sheridan nicknamed him, who was as famous for his audacity and mendacity as he was for his acting. His father was a theatrical bill-sticker, and in his younger days John carried the paste-can. One night he was rather ostentatiously flashing his diamonds in Drury Lane green-room, ‘Are they real?’ inquired one of the actors. ‘I never wear anything else,’ answered Jack, sharply. ‘Indeed! Well, I remember the time you had nothing but *paste*,’ retorted the other. ‘Why don’t you stick him against the wall, Jack?’ cried out Bannister. Jack became stage-struck in his youth, and prevailed upon Garrick to hear him give portions of George Barnwell and Mercutio; but the great manager was not struck by the performance. He was more fortunate with Foote, who cast him Harry Scamper in ‘The Orators.’ In 1766, when he was only nineteen, Garrick changed his opinion of his abilities, and gave him a four years’ engagement. Two years

afterwards Robert Palmer, his namesake—the Palmer of the ‘Rosciad’—died, and John succeeded to many of his parts. He became an admirable actor. He was especially fine in the more insinuating villains of tragedy ; his Stukely was as great a performance in its way as Mrs. Siddons’s Mrs. Beverley ; as his villainy was gradually unfolded the audience hissed and howled at him ; the more excitable people would rise in their seats and shake their fists. ‘His villainy in Villeroy,’ says Boaden, ‘had a delicate and hopeless ardour of affection that made it an impossibility for Isabella to resist him. He seemed a being expressly favoured by fate to wind about that lovely victim the web of inextricable misery.’ In Joseph Surface he has probably never had a successor ; he was the man himself. Lamb, who has discoursed most pleasantly upon his acting in this part, says that when he played it, Joseph Surface was the hero of the play. After Henderson he was the best Falstaff, and an inimitable Sir Toby Belch ; as My Lord Duke, in ‘High Life Below Stairs,’ he was exquisitely diverting. In the leading characters of tragedy, however, he did not rise above mediocrity. In such parts as Captain Absolute, Young Wilding, Dick Amlet, characters of cool impudence, he was inimitable. Geneste enumerates three hundred parts performed by him, and gives those only as a selection. He built the Royalty Theatre in Wellclose Square, which he opened in June, 1787, with a strong company. On that occasion Braham, then only fourteen years of age, made his first appearance upon the stage as Master Abraham, and sang between the pieces. The patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden commenced proceedings against Palmer, and the magistrates summoned him to appear before them at a tavern in the neighbourhood, to show under what license he was acting. Jack bowed and scraped to them with the most excessive humility. He had the document at home, he said ; would they so far indulge him as to wait while he went and fetched it ?—he lived close by, he would

not be two minutes. Permission was granted, and with his hand upon his heart and invoking Heaven to bless them, he took his departure. After waiting some time for his return, the gentlemen rang the bell for the waiter, who upon trying to open the door, found it locked, the key gone, and the magistrates prisoners. Jack had no license, and fearing they would commit him to prison, had turned the key upon the quorum and put it into his pocket. He was not seen again until the storm was blown over. When he returned to Drury Lane he met Sheridan with an air of the most penitent humility, his head lowered, the whites of his eyes turned up, one hand upon his heart, the other holding a white pocket-handkerchief—a complete picture of Joseph Surface. ‘My dear Mr. Sheridan,’ he began, ‘if you could but know at this moment what I feel *here*.’ ‘Why, Jack, you forget I *wrote it*,’ interrupted Sheridan. And Jack was not only reinstated in his former position, but his salary was raised three pounds a week. Sometimes a letter would arrive at six o’clock to say he was too ill to act. One night Sheridan, suspecting a trick, went off to his house. A friend of Jack’s contrived to get there before him and give him warning of the visit. He found the hypocrite convivially dining; but by the time the manager arrived his face was swathed in flannel, while the most agonising groans issued from his lips. He assured him with tears that his mental sufferings were far worse from the knowledge that they were injuring the establishment. Sheridan, completely deceived by the consummate actor, went away quite grieved at having suspected him. A favourite excuse for breaking his appointments was his wife’s accouchement. Michael Kelly once congratulated him on having a wife who made him a happy father at least once in two months. He confessed to having once persuaded a bailiff, who had arrested him for debt, to become his bail. As might be expected from such a man, he was reckless and extravagant, and his affairs were in sad confusion. There were always writs out against him, and

to avoid the bailiffs, he had frequently to be conveyed to the theatre in a box or other stage-properties. His end was remarkable. He was playing the 'Stranger' at Liverpool in August, 1798, and had been for some time much depressed in mind through the death of his wife. In the scene with Baron Steinfort, while speaking of his children, as he came to the line, 'I left them at a town hard by,' he stopped suddenly, then endeavoured to proceed, but in the effort fell upon his back, heaved a convulsive sigh, and expired immediately.

In every respect, in figure, gait, and face, PARSONS was essentially marked out for old men's characters, and whether he exhibited avarice, fondness, insensibility, weakness, he never for a moment forgot the part he was acting. 'Every passion circulated in him to the extremities, and spoke in the motion of his feet and hands.' His Crabtree, of which he was the original, was inimitable; so was his Sir Fretful Plagiary. Boaden describes him attempting to enjoy Sneer criticisms with tears in his eyes, then suddenly checking an unnatural laugh to stare aghast at his tormentors. He was born in 1736, and educated at St. Paul's School. His father was a builder, and it was intended he should succeed to the business, but the footlights had more attraction for him. He made his first appearance at Drury Lane in 1761. There is a little romance connected with his life. His second wife was the daughter of the Honourable James Stewart, the brother of the Earl of Galloway. Escaping from a convent abroad, in which she had been placed against her will, she came over to London quite destitute of friends, met Parsons by accident who, interested by her forlorn position, married her. He retired in 1795, and went to live in the neighbourhood of Blackheath; he is buried in the churchyard of that parish.

Boaden describes DODD as 'the prince of pink heels and the soul of empty eminence. As he tottered rather than walked down the stage, in all the protuberance of endles-

muslin and lace in his cravats and frills, he reminded you of the jutting motion of the pigeon. He took his snuff, or his bergamot, with a delight so beyond all grosser enjoyments that he left you no doubt whatever of the superior happiness of a coxcomb.' He was the last of the fops whose reign began with Cibber. How exquisitely Charles Lamb has described his acting in Sir Andrew Aguecheek. 'In expressing slowness of apprehension this actor surpassed all others. You could see the first dawn of an idea stealing slowly over his countenance, climbing up by little and little, with a painful process, till it cleared up at last to the fulness of a twilight conception—its highest meridian. He seemed to keep back his intellect as some have had the power to retard their pulsation. The balloon takes less time in filling, than it took to cover the expansion of his broad moony face over all its quarters with expression. A glimmer of understanding would appear in the corner of his eye, and for lack of fuel go out again. A part of his forehead would catch a little intelligence, and be a long time in communicating it to the remainder.' He was the original Sir Benjamin Backbite. He made his first appearance at Drury Lane, after a hard novitiate in the provinces, in 1765, and retired in 1796. He was a man of cultivated taste and left behind him a very valuable library, which was sold by auction after his death; the King, the Duke of Roxburgh, and John Kemble bought the principal part of it.

The name of FARREN stands against Careless in the original cast of Sheridan's comedy. This was the father of the future great Sir Peter. AICKIN, a useful actor, was the Rowley; LAMASH and PACKER, upon whom we need not pause, the Trip and Snake.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE LADIES.

Mrs. Pritchard—Compared with Mrs. Siddons—Lady Macbeth—Mrs. Pritchard in the banquet scene—Mrs. Cibber—Titania and Bottom—Her acting—Unhappy domestic life—A Sir Pandarus—Garrick's valediction—George Anne Bellamy—Her *début*—An eccentric duchess—A romantic abduction—Garrick counter-checked—An Irishman puzzled—An actress's vengeance—A singular marriage contract—A ladies' battle—A faded beauty—The last chapter of a sad romance—Mrs. Spranger Barry—A persecuted pair—Twice a widow—Hamlet fiddling an Irish jig—Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Siddons—Mrs. Yates—Miss Younge A touch of nature—Peg Woffington—Her early life—First introduction to the stage—Sir Harry Wildair—Connection with Garrick—President of Beef-Steak Club—A melancholy last scene—Kitty Clive—Her jealousy of Garrick—Her penchant for tragedy—Anecdotes—Mrs. Abington—Cinderella—A leader of fashion—Her incomparable powers—Miss Pope.

Of the ladies of this period precedence must be given both on chronological and artistic grounds to HANNAH PRITCHARD. Her early career was very humble; as Miss Vaughan she acted at the fairs about the neighbourhood of London, and married a poor actor of little talent, named Pritchard. Then she appeared at the Haymarket in one of Fielding's pieces, and soon afterwards went over to Drury Lane. She held a leading position upon the London stage some ten years before Garrick appeared. In her youth she was attractive and genteel, and her simple yet expressive manner, and unaffected delivery of dialogue both in tragedy and comedy, charmed every spectator. In all characters of intrigue, mirth, and gaiety, as Rosalind, Lady Brute, Estifania, Beatrice, Lady Townley, Lady Betty Modish, she could not be surpassed, and even in her latter years, when her face and figure had become too full and coarse, the beautiful Woffington shrank from her rivalry. She was equally famous in

scolds, like Termagant, Doll Common, Mrs. Oakley. Indeed it was agreed by all contemporaries that her comic powers exceeded her tragic. She raised the character of the Queen in ‘Hamlet,’ however, to a grandeur and importance such as no other had ever imparted to it: and Davies says, in nothing was her loss regretted more than in that. As Queen Katherine even, Mrs. Siddons could never shake her supremacy. In comparing the two as artistes, the palm must be given to Mrs. Pritchard on account of her versatility. ‘When,’ says a contemporary, ‘Mrs. Pritchard plays Merope she is Merope, and nothing of herself appears; but all the character, the spirit of Mr. Garrick, the softness of Mr. Barry, and the melancholy of Mrs. Cibber attend them in whatever part they play; but Mrs. Pritchard, having no distinguishing marks of this kind, carries with her nothing that is peculiar to herself into the character.’ Dibdin says, ‘She was everywhere great, everywhere impressive, everywhere feminine.’

She is now chiefly remembered as Mrs. Siddons’ greatest predecessor in *Lady Macbeth*. Great was the dispute, when Kemble appeared in that part, over the comparative excellences of the two ladies. Lord Harcourt said that Mrs. Siddons wanted the dignity, compass, and melody of Mrs. Pritchard; he considered her inferior in the banquet scene, and, although he approved of her dispensing with the taper, and imitating the washing of the hands—effects impossible to the elder actress—he said her sigh was not so terrible, nor her voice so sleepy yet articulate, as Mrs. Pritchard’s. The points made by the two actresses were different; as an instance, when *Lady Macbeth* is urging her husband to the murder of Duncan, Mrs. Pritchard’s answer to his, ‘If we should fail?’ was daring and scornful. ‘*We fail!* But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we’ll *not fail!*’ Mrs. Siddons’ reply was subdued, ‘*We fail!* But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we’ll *not fail!*’ Davies finely describes her acting in the banquet

scene: ‘Mrs. Pritchard showed admirable art in endeavouring to hide Macbeth’s frenzy from the observation of the guests, by drawing their attention to conviviality. She smiled on one, whispered to another, and distantly saluted a third; in short, she practised every possible artifice to hide the transaction that passed between her husband and the vision his disturbed imagination had raised. Her reproving and angry looks, which glanced towards Macbeth, at the same time, were mixed with marks of inward vexation and uneasiness. When at last, as if unable to support her feelings any longer, she rose from her seat, and seized his arm, and, with a half whisper of terror, said: “*Are you a man?*” She assumed a look of such anger, indignation, and contempt as cannot be surpassed.’ It has been said, but the assertion is doubtful, that she never read a line of Macbeth beyond what affected her own part. Dr. Johnson called her an inspired idiot. But, whatever might have been her intellectual calibre, she bore an irreproachable character in private life.

‘Her voice as free from blemish as her fame,’

writes Churchill. She was a favourite with all classes, and few actresses have ever been so powerfully patronised.

After thirty-eight years of toil, she took her farewell of the stage in 1768, as Lady Macbeth, surviving her retirement only a few months. Garrick wrote an epilogue for the occasion. It was the last time he ever appeared as Macbeth, and he could never hope to find such another partner of his greatness.

The most famous representative at this period of the tender and passionate heroines of tragedy was MRS. CIBBER.

Upon the death of his first wife, in 1733, Theophilus Cibber began to pay court to the charming Susanna Maria Arne, then little over twenty, the sister of the celebrated composer. She had already appeared as a singer at the

Opera House, and her beautiful voice and sweet face secured her success. What could possess so delicate a creature to listen to the addresses of such an ugly ruffian as Theophilus Cibber it is impossible to conceive, unless we ascribe it to that odd perversity of the feminine nature which has an affinity for its opposites, even when the opposites are monstrosities; the match was said to have been against her inclination, but by whom she was coerced does not appear. Be it as it may, our Titania was married to this Bottom in 1734, and she had bitter cause to repent it ever after. It was arranged that she should quit the lyric for the dramatic stage. In 1736 she made her *entrée* at Drury Lane as Zara, in Aaron Hill's tragedy of that name, and leaped at once to the highest position in her art. Each new character was for her a new triumph, and if half the praise given to her by contemporaries were deserved she must have been a divine actress.

'Her great excellence,' says Davies, 'consisted in that simplicity which needed no ornament, in that sensibility which despised all art. There was in her person little or no elegance; in her countenance a small share of beauty; but nature had given her such symmetry of form and fine expression of feature, that she preserved all the appearance of youth long after she had reached to middle life—the harmony of her voice was as powerful as the animation of her look—in grief and tenderness, her eyes looked as if they swam in tears—in rage and despair they seemed to dart flashes of fire—in spite of the unimportance of her figure she maintained a dignity in her action and a grace in her step. Tate Wilkinson says he could imitate Garrick, Quin, Mrs. Bellamy, and Mrs. Crawford, so as to give a very good idea of their manner, but Mrs. Cibber's excellence was of that superior kind that he could only retain in his mind's eye. 'She was the best Ophelia that ever was either before or since; no eloquence could paint her distracted look, her fine acting in the mad scene.' Charming in everything she

undertook, she seemed to be identified with Ophelia. Indeed, she may be regarded as the creator of the feminine ideal of the part. Its previous principal interpreters had been Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Booth, and the former had received, through Davenant, the traditions of the boy-actresses of the pre-Restoration period. Garrick had doubted her ability to play Constance ('King John'). 'Don't tell me, Mr. Garrick,' said Quin; 'that woman has a heart, and can do anything where passion is required.' The elder actor was right. Davies says she had no successor in the part; even Mrs. Yates fell below her. 'It was her most perfect character. When going off the stage, she uttered the words, "O Lord, my boy!" with such an emphatical scream of agony as will never be forgotten by those who heard her.' 'Other actresses,' writes Dibdin, 'may have had more fire; but I believe that all tragic characters, truly feminine, greatly conceived, and highly written, had a superior representative in Mrs. Cibber than any other actress.' Cumberland, however, gives us a more distinct picture of her style, and not so flattering a one. Describing her in *Calista* ('Fair Penitent') he says: 'Mrs. Cibber, in a key high pitched, but sweet withal, sang, or rather recitatively, Rowe's harmonious strain something in the manner of the improvisatores; it was so extremely wanting in contrast that though it did not wound the ear it wearied it. When she had once recited two or three speeches, I could anticipate the manner of every succeeding one; it was like the long old legendary ballad of innumerable stanzas, every one of which is sung to the same tune, eternally chiming in the ear without variety or relief.' It was thus the great actresses of the French classic stage recited, and once accustomed to those artificial cadences they must, when given by a silvery voice and an accomplished artist full of soul and passion, have imparted a peculiar charm to scenes of love and tenderness. Cumberland's remarks, however, apply to a performance in 1746, before Garrick's natural style had superseded

the artificiality of his predecessors, and such a revolution could not have been without effect upon an actress so constantly associated with him as Mrs. Cibber.

Not content with squandering her salary and neglecting her, Mr. Cibber, jun., played the part of Sir Pandarus, and introduced into his house a young gentleman of fortune, gave him every opportunity of forming a close intimacy with his wife, borrowed £400 of him, and took a journey into France, leaving them together. She, perceiving the infamous game he was playing, and loathing him for it, went further than he intended, for she quitted his roof and went away with her lover to Windsor. When Theophilus returned, he brought her back by force, and made her a prisoner in his house ; from which her brother rescued her by the same means. She went back to her protector, who was a man of honour and sincerely attached to her. Theophilus now began to rave about his injured honour, which could only be healed by £5,000 damages. But the Court saw through his villainy, and awarded him ten guineas, while his wife accepted the protection of the man to whom she had been betrayed, and faithfully passed with him the remainder of her life. Theophilus, who was deeply in debt, had depended upon the *ruse* to clear himself ; when it failed, his creditors threw him into the King's Bench. By means of charity and benefits he obtained his release ; but despised by everybody, his father included, he sank into the lowest dissipation ; managers would not engage him, as he was of a mutinous disposition, and was continually stirring up strife among the actors. At length, in 1758, his miserable life was brought to an end ; the ship in which he was crossing the Channel to fulfil an engagement at Dublin, sank during a terrible storm, and Theophilus Cibber was among the passengers who went to the bottom. As an actor, he was chiefly remarkable for his impersonation of Ancient Pistol, by which name he was known among his associates ; his voice was shrill, his person ungainly, his features ugly,

and his style of acting exaggerated. He was the author of several plays and adaptations.

Mrs. Cibber survived him only eight years. Long previously she had been suffering from a disorder, the nature of which was only discovered after her death, and which frequently prevented her from acting. Her health was so precarious, and she was so subject to frequent relapses, that the newspapers ranked her amongst the dead nearly three months before her decease. About a month prior to her death, the King commanded the comedy of ‘The Provoked Wife’; she was then very unwell, but was supposed to be recovering some degree of health. Nothing could prevent her paying her duty to the King and Queen by performing Lady Brute, which was one of her favourite characters. This was generally believed to have been the cause of her death. It was her last appearance, and one month afterwards, in January, 1766, she was carried from her house in Scotland Yard to the cloisters of the Abbey, where Mrs. Bracegirdle, Betterton, and so many others of the craft had gone before her.

‘Then tragedy died with her,’ said Garrick, upon hearing the sad news. ‘And yet she was the greatest female plague belonging to my house. I could easily parry the artless thrusts and despise the coarse language of some of my other heroines; but whatever was Cibber’s object, a new part or a new dress, she was always sure to carry her point by the acuteness of her invective and the steadiness of her perseverance.’

Mrs. Cibber’s most formidable rival in the lovelorn heroines of tragedy was GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY, and during the famous Romeo and Juliet contest, perhaps, the palm of victory rested as decidedly with the younger, more beautiful, and more impulsive actress, as it did with Barry. Her story is a most romantic one. She was the illegitimate daughter of Lord Tyrawley, by the wife of one Captain Bellamy, and was born in the year 1731. My lord acknow-

ledged her, and had her educated in a convent in Boulogne; there she remained until she was eight years old, after which she was brought home to his house and thrown into such male society as the old *roué* delighted in. By-and-by he was appointed Ambassador to Russia, and upon George Anne electing to live with her mother, he refused to make her any allowance, and cast her destitute upon the world. Through her mother, who had appeared on the stage for a short time, she made the acquaintance of Rich. One day the old manager accidentally overheard her, while in company with his daughters, deliver some speeches from 'Othello,' and was so struck by her powers that he proposed she should turn her attention to the stage. She was then just fourteen, very beautiful, graceful, and fascinating. After one or two private performances, in which Garrick took part, she was announced to appear upon the Covent Garden stage as Monimia in 'The Orphan.' Quin was indignant at this mere child being cast for such a part. 'It will not do, sir,' growled the burly tyrant; and as Quin ruled the theatre, manager and all, it was considered that the fiat had gone forth; but, to everybody's surprise, Rich answered, 'But it shall do, sir.' None of the three principal gentlemen would appear at the rehearsal, but the manager, to console her for these snubs, bought her a magnificent dress to appear in. Quin and his followers prophesied dead failure; but Rich, who had the most profound belief in his *protégée*, had spread about such extraordinary accounts of her ability, and thereby so raised public curiosity, that on the night of her *début* the house was crammed with a most brilliant audience. In the first scene her confusion was so great that the curtain had to be dropped until she recovered. When she next appeared, nervousness rendered her voice inaudible. Quin was exultant; Rich was in despair, imploring her to rouse herself, and inciting his friends to encourage her by their applause. But it was not until the fourth act that she could shake off this para-

lysis of timidity. ‘Suddenly,’ she says, ‘to the astonishment of the audience, the surprise of the performers, and the exultation of the manager, I felt myself as it were inspired. I blazed out at once with meridian splendour, and I acquitted myself throughout the whole arduous part of the character, in which even many veterans have failed, with the greatest *éclat*.’ Quin changed from scorn to rapture. ‘Thou art a divine creature, and the true spirit is in thee!’ he cried, lifting her off her feet in his transport. He was a friend and protector to her ever after.

That one night made her famous; she became the fashion. Ladies of quality patronised and petted her. Among her patrons was the celebrated and eccentric Duchess of Queensberry. She tells a capital story of her first introduction to her Grace. A few days before her benefit Miss Bellamy received a summons to present herself at Queensberry House by twelve o’clock the next day. Arraying herself in her best and hiring a chair, she arrived there at the appointed time; but what was her mortification when, after taking up her name, the domestic returned to say that her Grace knew no such person! This, however, was much exceeded by her astonishment when she was informed that same evening that nearly every box in the house had been secured by the Duchess, and a note was given her from that lady, again requesting a visit on the following morning. This time, dreading a second mortification, she dressed very plainly, and walked. She was, however, at once ushered into her Grace’s presence. ‘Well, young woman,’ was her salutation, ‘what business had you in a chair yesterday? It was a fine morning, and you ought to have walked. You look as you ought to do now. Nothing is so vulgar as wearing silk in the morning. Simplicity best becomes youth, and you do not stand in need of ornaments; therefore always dress plain, except when you are upon the stage.’ While she talked, she was cleaning a picture. Her visitor begged to be allowed to assist her. ‘Don’t you think I’ve domestics enough, if I

didn't choose to do it myself?" was the sharp rejoinder. Then she drew a canvas bag out of her cabinet, and said, 'There are two hundred and fifty guineas, and twenty for the Duke's tickets and mine : but I must give you something for Tyrawley's sake.' She then took a bill from her pocket-book, which having put into my hands, she told me her coach was ordered to carry me home, lest any accident should happen to me now I had such a charge about me.'

It need scarcely be said that the beautiful young actress was importuned by all the noble *roués* about town. But she tells us that she would not listen to any proposals, 'but marriage and a coach.' Among the most urgent of her suitors was Lord Byron, who, finding her deaf to all entreaties, resolved to resort to force. One Sunday evening a messenger came to her lodgings in Southampton Street to say that a young lady friend was waiting for her in a coach at the end of the street. Not staying to put on hat or gloves she ran to the coach, where she was seized, lifted in, and found herself beside a friend of my lord's ; he said that no harm was intended her if she would consent to make Lord Byron happy, who was about to be married to a young lady of large fortune, which would enable him to make a handsome provision for her. All this time the horses were galloping at full speed, until they stopped before a house at the corner of North Audley Street, about which at this period all was open country. The abductor, who was an Earl, carried her into the house, which was his own, and then went away to prepare, as he said, a lodging he had engaged for her in Carnaby Market. Now follows an extraordinary incident, which reads like a chapter out of an old novel. She had a half-brother, who had been abroad several years and whose return was hourly expected ; it so happened that he turned the corner of the street where she was lodging just as the coach was driving off. He saw a young lady forced into it, but without recognising her. He ran to the rescue, but the horses soon outstripped him. On reaching

her lodgings, and inquiring for his sister, he found everybody in a state of distraction. ‘Oh! fly, fly to her relief,’ cried one; ‘she has been run off with by Lord ——.’ He at once proceeded to that nobleman’s residence, and not finding him at home walked up and down before the door, determined not to go away without seeing him. So that when my lord returned he found himself confronted by a personage whom he little expected, and who insisted upon being conducted to Miss Bellamy’s presence. There was no evading the request, and the young lady’s surprise and delight may be imagined when she saw the Earl enter the room thus accompanied. But her pleasure was shortlived: believing her to be a willing party to the elopement, he repulsed her so violently that she fell to the ground in a swoon. When consciousness returned, she was told there had been a dreadful scene; her brother had inflicted manual chastisement upon the Earl, and then left the house, vowing he would never look upon her face again. He at once started for Portsmouth, and so left her to her fate. Upon being taken to the lodging prepared for her, she discovered the mistress of the house to be a mantua-maker who worked for her, and to whom she told her story. ‘My appearance, as well as my eyes, which were much swelled with crying, was an undeniable testimony of the truth of my assertions.’ Her mother, who had now turned religious, proved as unbelieving and inexorable as her son, and the poor girl fell into a dangerous fever. We next hear of her residing with some Quaker relations in Essex, of a reconciliation with her mother, and of her engaging with Sheridan for Dublin; there she was very well received by Miss O’Hara, Lord Tyrawley’s sister, who introduced her to all her fashionable friends as her niece. Her beauty, youth, and talents, together with the patronage of these noble personages, especially that of the Honourable Mrs. Butler, a lady of great consequence in the society of the Irish capital, at once secured her success.

The adulation and applause that everywhere greeted her both before and behind the scenes turned the young lady's head ; and when Garrick, who was starring at the time in Dublin, refused to let her play Constance with him in ' King John,' on account of her youth, she was so indignant that she prevailed upon her patroness to inflict upon the great actor an unexpected humiliation. Mrs. Butler gave large balls and parties, and possessed such influence in society that she had only to send round and request her friends not to visit the theatre that evening for Garrick, who had been hitherto playing to crowded houses, to perform to empty benches. The next time ' King John ' was represented, Miss Bellamy appeared as Constance, and more people were turned away than would have filled the house twice over. But not even this triumph could heal the wounded vanity of this miss in her teens ; and when Garrick fixed upon ' Jane Shore ' for his benefit and solicited her to play the heroine, she absolutely refused, sarcastically alleging the objection he had offered against her playing Constance — her youth. David, always prudent where his interests were concerned, instead of resenting the affront, further flattered my young lady's vanity by writing her an entreating note, in which he promised that if she would oblige him he would write her '*a goody-goody* epilogue, which, with the help of your eyes, shall do more mischief than ever the flesh or the devil has done since the world began.' He directed this note ' To my Soul's Idol, the Beatified Ophelia,' and gave it to his servant to deliver. The fellow, instead of performing his errand, handed it over to a porter in the street, without glancing at the address, which he supposed was the same as had been orally given him. The porter, upon reading the superscription, scratched his head. He knew the name of every person of quality in the city, but no one entitled ' My Soul's Idol, or the Beatified Ophelia.' Thinking it was a joke he passed the letter over to a newsman, who thereupon inserted it in one of the newspapers, to the intense

amusement of the public. But Garrick's humiliation, and her own, were amply avenged by Mrs. Furnival, the actress who had been dispossessed of the part of Constance by young madam's arrogance. Miss Bellamy was to play Cleopatra, and Sheridan had bought for her a very magnificent dress, worn by the Princess of Wales upon her birthday—not very appropriate, perhaps, to the Egyptian queen, but they were not archaeologists in those days. To add to her splendour Mrs. Butler had lent her a number of diamonds. On the day of performance the dress was left in the dressing-room by her maid while she went on some errand. Mrs. Furnival, who was to play Octavia, happening to pass by caught sight of the splendid raiment, and without a moment's hesitation entered, carried it off to her own tiring-room, and proceeded to adapt it to her own figure. Great was the consternation of the careless servant upon her return to find the dress with all the diamonds gone. Being told it was in Mrs. Furnival's possession she ran like a madwoman to her room and demanded its return. It was coolly refused. Upon which hot with rage she fell tooth and nail upon the spoiler, whose screams speedily brought assistance. But the spoil was retained, and when Miss Bellamy requested her to restore the jewels, the reply was that she should have them after the play. Nor could threats or entreaties move her. And Octavia marched on, a blaze of silver tissue and diamonds, while Cleopatra had to put up with the plain, dingy dress which had been intended for Antony's wife. Only a woman could have conceived such an exquisite revenge.

Upon her return to England, Miss Bellamy joined Rich at Covent Garden, was visited by her father, and a reconciliation took place. Unfortunately, however, he selected a husband of whom she did not approve, and finding him peremptory, she eloped one night from the theatre in the middle of the performance, in her stage-dress, with a Mr. Metham, the man of her heart, who promised to marry her.

But she soon discovered she had been duped, and that, on account of certain legal settlements, he could not make her his wife during his father's life. After a few months' absence she returned to the stage, to be again the great attraction and to be still received in the society of ladies of rank and reputation. She continued to live with Metham for some time ; but finding little chance of his fulfilling his promise she listened to the addresses of a gentleman named Calcraft, an army contractor, who made the curious proposal of signing a bond to make her his wife within six or seven years, on the forfeiture of fifty thousand pounds. The excuse he alleged for this delay was his dependence upon Mr. Fox, who forbade the union, but within the specified time he should be able to realise sufficient to be independent of him. After much and long persuasion she consented. 'The contract was immediately executed : and except the omission of the ceremony, our nuptials were celebrated to the satisfaction of all parties, *but my poor self.*' By-and-by she discovered that the man was already married, and therefore could not keep his engagement. She published a statement with an appeal to the public, and there was a great scandal. From this time her course was a downward one, over which we draw a veil.

She and Woffington were rivals and deadly foes. Peggy, whatever might have been her errors, was a thoroughly trained actress with a real devotion to her art, in which she worked hard. Bellamy, although possessed of undoubted abilities, was never much more than a clever amateur ; she had begun too high on the ladder ; she had thought more of her dress and her looks than of her acting ; she exercised her profession capriciously, and her heart was never in it, except in so far as it ministered to her vanity and extravagance, therefore there is little doubt that Woffington had something of scorn in her jealousy. Poor old Rich must have been ever in hot water with their perpetual bickering and quarrelling. He had revived Lee's 'Alexander the

'Great' for Barry, and the two ladies were very appropriately to appear as 'The Rival Queens.' Bellamy sent to Paris for the two most splendid dresses that could be bought. Rich purchased for Woffington a suit which had belonged to the Princess Dowager of Wales ; it was quite new, looked beautiful by day, but being of a pale straw colour faded into a dirty white by candle-light. And, whether accidentally or purposely, Bellamy had chosen a bright yellow, over which she wore a purple robe. The contrast was terrible. As soon as Woffington saw her, almost bursting with rage, she, with a haughty air, addressed her thus : 'I desire, madam, you will never more upon any account wear those clothes in the piece we perform to-night.' Bellamy promised not to do so, but, with artful malice, the next night she donned dress No. 2, which was even more splendid than the former. This so kindled Mrs. Woffington's rage that it nearly bordered on madness ; she drove her off the stage, and gave her the *coup de grâce* almost in sight of the audience. The night after the yellow and purple was again worn, and Woffington all in a fury demanded 'how she dared to dress again in the manner that she had so strictly prohibited ?' Rich was sent for, but wisely declined to come. Upon which there were mutual recriminations. Roxana thrust home when she said, 'It was well for her that she had a minister to supply her extravagance with jewels and such paraphernalia.' To which Statira retorted, 'that she was sorry that even half the town could not furnish a supply equal to the minister she so illiberally hinted at.' Upon which Woffington's fury was so great that her rival took to her heels and fled, 'frighted at the sound herself had made,' but was even then only saved from a terrible mauling by the interposition of the Comte de Haslang, who was in the green-room at the time. Such adventures may seem very shocking to the refinement of the present day ; but such behaviour was not confined to actresses, being frequently indulged in by ladies of title. Foote getting hold of the

quarrel produced a piece entitled ‘The Green-room Squabble; or, a Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius.’ In her best days, Miss Bellamy disputed the empire of the stage not only with Woffington, but with Mrs. Cibber herself. In the delineation of all-absorbing passionate love she had no equal. Her Juliet was perfection. Of her Belvidera, a fine judge said, ‘I came to admire Garrick : I go away enchanted with Bellamy.’ Her surpassing beauty, her soft blue eyes, her exquisite fairness, rendered her a very goddess of love : while in brilliancy of wit and powers of conversation she was even Woffington’s rival. Wealth was poured upon her and scattered as recklessly as it was showered ; but not always wasted, for her charities were munificent. She gave £1,000 towards better clothing our soldiers in the war, and as she passed through the Park every sentinel saluted her.

But she could not long escape the consequences of such a life. Giving herself up entirely to pleasure she began to neglect her profession, and became so careless and capricious that the public would no longer tolerate her, and managers would not engage her. At length, in 1760, Mossop, in remembrance of the former rage she had created in Dublin, offered her £1,000 for the season. Years had elapsed since that memorable first visit ; the remembrance of her beauty and talent was still fresh in the minds of her old admirers, and their talk and anticipations stimulated the rising generation with an eager curiosity to behold this paragon ; so that when she arrived at her lodgings she found a crowd collected about the door to see her alight. But, alas ! though only nine-and-twenty, the once enchanting loveliness was faded, and the crowd saw only ‘a little dirty creature, bent nearly double, enfeebled by fatigue, her countenance tinged with jaundice, and in every respect the reverse of a person who could make the least pretension to beauty.’ The description is her own. Tate Wilkinson describes her reception as Belvidera. ‘On speaking her first line before

the scenes—"Lead me, ye virgins, lead me to that kind voice"—it struck the ears of the audience as uncouth and unmusical; yet she was received, as was prepared and determined by all who were her or Mr. Mossop's friends, and by the public at large, with repeated plaudits on her *entrée*. But the roses were fled! The young, the once lovely Bellamy, was turned haggard! and her eyes, that used to charm all hearts, appeared sunk, large, hollow, and ghastly. O Time! Time! thy glass should be often consulted; for before the first short scene had elapsed, disappointment, chagrin, and pity sat on every eye and countenance. By the end of the third act, they were all (like Bobadil) planet-struck; the other two acts were hobbled through. Mossop was cut to the heart, and never played Pierre (one of his best parts) so indifferently as on that night. The curtain dropped, and poor Bellamy never after drew a single house there. She left Dublin without a single friend to regret her loss. And as an actress of note, her name never more ranked in any theatre, nor did she ever again rise in public estimation.'

Although in the receipt of fifty guineas a week, she was arrested for debt long before the termination of her engagement. Upon her return to London this was a frequent occurrence. At length, to avoid writs, she engaged herself as housekeeper to the Comte de Haslang, who, being an ambassador, secured to all his household immunity from arrest. Her downward course was now fast and furious; one after another went diamonds, clothes, all she possessed; then she borrowed small sums of money from every person who would lend to her, lived within the Rules of the King's Bench, and was only deterred one night from casting herself off Westminster Bridge by overhearing the plaints of a creature even more miserable than herself.

In 1785 a benefit was organised for her at Covent Garden. Reynolds, the dramatist, thus describes the sad scene: 'I dwell for a moment on a last appearance which I witnessed,

namely, that of Mrs. Bellamy, who took her leave of the stage May 24, 1785. On this occasion Miss Farren, the present Countess of Derby, spoke an address which concluded with the following couplet :

“ “But see, oppress’d with gratitude and tears,  
To pay her dueous tribute, she appears.”

The curtain then ascended, and Mrs. Bellamy being discovered, the whole house immediately arose to mark their favourable inclinations towards her, and from anxiety to obtain a view of this once celebrated actress, and, in consequence of the publication of her life, then celebrated authoress. She was seated in an arm-chair, from which she in vain attempted to rise, so completely was she subdued by her feelings. She, however, succeeded in muttering a few words expressive of her gratitude, and then, sinking into her seat, the curtain dropped before her—for ever? She died in 1788.

One of the greatest actresses of this period was MRS. SPRANGER BARRY. Her maiden name was Street, and she was the daughter of a Bath apothecary. While on a visit in the North, to which she had been sent on account of a love disappointment, she made the acquaintance of Dancer, an actor, and being stage-struck herself, became his wife. Natural talents were assisted by a fine figure and a beautiful face. But her parents were so indignant at her choice that they commenced a regular persecution of the young people, wrote to the magistrates of every town they entered and had them driven out, until they were obliged to leave the country. They went over to Dublin, and joined Barry's company. Soon afterwards Dancer died. There was an Irish earl madly in love with the beautiful young widow, but he of the silver tongue loved her also, and carried her off from his aristocratical rival. When Barry returned to London he brought her, now Mrs. Barry, with him. She made her *début* at the Haymarket under Foote, in 1766. Garrick was

in front, recognised her powers, engaged her, and from that time she took her place beside the greatest actresses of the age. ‘I have seen her,’ writes a critic, ‘as Cordelia, in “King Lear,” raising to heaven her large eyes glistening with tears : and then, speechless and wringing her hands, as it seemed to me with the aureole of a saint round her head, flinging herself into her father’s arms. It is the grandest thing of the kind I have ever seen an actress do ; my fancy still feeds on it, and the recollection of it will go with me to my grave.’ At this time she was nearly forty years of age. ‘Who like her,’ wrote a critic in the *Morning Chronicle* (1782), ‘ever possessed the power of melting an audience into tears, or of chilling them with horror, or of dissolving them in tenderness, or inflaming them with all the transports of rage and fury—of, in short, modelling their hearts to the passions she means to represent ? She is happy beyond any other woman in the dumb expression of passion labouring within.’ Her comedy was equally admirable : and Taylor considered her Rosalind to have been the most perfect representation of the part he had ever witnessed ; while her Beatrice was as full of life and spirit, as her Belvidera was overwhelmingly pathetic. She used to say she played tragedy to please the town, comedy to please herself.

Two years after Barry’s death she married a wild young Irish barrister, named Crawford, who ran through all her fortune, and then, under her tuition, became a respectable actor and started in management in Dublin. His spend-thrift habits, however, prevented a commercial success ; salaries were unpaid and everything fell into confusion. One night when ‘Hamlet’ was to be performed, he had to appear before the audience, dressed for the part, to apologise for the absence of the orchestra, the musicians having struck for their salaries. There was a murmur of discontent, and the spectators did not seem disposed to accept his excuses, when some one in the gallery, who was evidently acquainted with Crawford’s musical abilities, suggested that he should

'tip' them a tune himself upon the fiddle. Crawford fetched his violin, came back to the footlights, and struck up 'Paddy O'Rafferty,' the lively strains of which so warmed his Irish blood that the representative of the Danish Prince began to bob his head and fling up his heels to the time, threatening every moment to break into a jig. The strain finished, Crawford retired, amidst enthusiastic applause, to compose himself for the tragedy.

Mrs. Crawford continued to be unrivalled in her great parts until Mrs. Siddons' wonderful success swept all rivalry before it. Nothing daunted, however, the elder actress entered the lists against her in *Lady Randolph*, one of her finest characters, and the public flocked eagerly to renew old impressions and to confirm doubtful judgments. Mrs. Crawford was of the Garrick school, and her method was entirely different to that of the Siddons: she reserved herself for bursts of passion, while the other equally elaborated every line. Mrs. Crawford far surpassed her in vehemence of feeling. 'Her voice,' says Boaden, 'was like a flaming arrow—it was the lightning of passion. Such was the effect of her almost shriek to Old Norval, "Was he alive?" It was an electric shock that drove the blood back to the heart, and made you cold, and shudder with terror in the midst of a crowded theatre.' 'If,' says another critic, 'her flights were higher, Siddons was longer upon the wing: if with her the blaze was brighter, with Siddons it was more constant; the one often surpassed expectation, the other never fell below it. Mrs. Siddons was pre-eminent in the dignified, the vehement, the maternal, and the intellectual; Mrs. Crawford in the tender, the confiding, the impassioned.' From which I think we may gather that Mrs. Crawford's was the finer genius of the two, and, had there not been such a disparity of years, it would have won for her a decided victory over her more correct but colder rival. But Mrs. Crawford was an old woman, who had grown coarse and ugly with years, the other was in the prime of her beauty; not even genius

could render the contest equal. For her benefit the elder actress was so foolish as to announce herself in Mrs. Siddons' greatest part, Isabella. But the boxes were not taken, and she fell ill of the disappointment. Her last appearance upon the stage was as Lady Randolph, at Covent Garden, in 1798. She died in 1801. Notwithstanding all the vicissitudes which followed upon her third marriage, the latter years of her life were passed in prosperous comfort.

MRS. YATES, another tragic actress celebrated for her beauty, although not equal in ability to those just mentioned, was admirable in declamatory characters, such as Medea, which not even Mrs. Siddons cared to play after her. She was rather of the French than the English school, cold and correct. There is a story told of her acting in Constance which gives us a vivid idea of her style. At the lines,

'I will not keep this form upon my head,  
When there is such disorder in my wit,'

she should cast her head-dress upon the ground, instead of which Mrs. Yates carefully hung it to her hoop. Grandeur and majesty were the finest attributes of her acting. Violante in 'The Wonder' was her only successful comedy part. She made her first appearance at Drury Lane in 1754, but her abilities were little esteemed, until she was called upon to play Mandane ('Orphan of China') in consequence of Mrs. Cibber's illness. Her last appearance was for Mrs. Bellamy's benefit. She died two years afterwards, in 1787.

MISS YOUNG, although scarcely to be placed on a level with such actresses as Pritchard, Cibber, and Barry, was an artist of fine powers, and might have succeeded to the throne they vacated but for the advent of Siddons. She was equally good in tragedy and comedy. Boaden says, 'she could play Queen Katherine well, but not equal to Mrs. Siddons; Beatrice excellently, although not equal to Mrs. Abington;' which implies that she was good in all, great in none. She made her first appearance at Drury Lane, in 1768; became

the wife of Pope, a respectable tragic actor, and retired in 1797. She was Garrick's last Cordelia. When the curtain fell upon 'King Lear,' the night before his farewell, he assisted her to rise, and, holding her hand in his, walked silently towards her dressing-room. He stopped at the door, and, turning to her, said sadly, 'Ah, Bessie, this is the last time I shall be your father!' Still under the influence of the sublime scenes they had been playing together, and impressed by the solemn melancholy of the great actor's manner, she raised her tearful eyes, knelt down at his feet, and asked him to give her a father's blessing. It was a spontaneous impulse, and both the actors in this touching scene were fully in earnest.

The ladies of his theatre were the plagues of Garrick's life. Woffington and Cibber were the torments of his earlier years; Younge, Abington, and Yates, of his later.

'Three thousand wives kill'd Orpheus in a rage,  
Three actresses drove Garrick from the stage,'

wrote an anonymous rhymester. While another thus ridiculed their affections:

'"I have no nerves," says Y—ge, "I cannot act."  
"I've lost my limbs," cries A—n, "'tis fact."  
Y—s screams, "I've lost my voice, my throat's so sore,"  
Garrick declares he'll play the fool no more.'

First let us take a glance at charming Peggy. 'Forgive her one female error,' says a biographer, 'and it might fairly be said of her that she was adorned with every virtue; honour, truth, benevolence, charity, were her distinguishing qualities.' Such might have been written of many another actress upon whom untempted prudery, who can boast no other virtue, looks down with scorn. 'Truth, honour, benevolence, charity'—these should weigh something against the one great fault. Her origin was of the meanest. She was born in Dublin, in 1718; her father, a poor bricklayer, died when she was only a few years old; her mother took in

washing as the only means of supporting her two little girls. ‘I have met with more than one in Dublin,’ says Lee Lewes in his ‘Memoirs,’ ‘who assured me that they remembered the lovely Peggy, with a little dish upon her hand, and without shoes to cover her delicate feet, crying through College Green, and Dame Street, and other parts of that end of the town : “All this fine young salad for a halfpenny ; all for a halfpenny here !”’ The little creature’s frequent visits to the College in the way of her profession, her early wit, and the sweet features she was blessed with, recommended her to the notice of many generous young students of the University, who were even then, when she was scarcely nine years old, lavish in their praises of her wit and beauty.’ Later on Peggy assisted her mother at the wash-tub, and used to fetch the water from the Liffey. Dirt, however, could not disfigure her dark, brilliant eyes, her exquisitely pencilled eyebrows—the nobility and expressiveness of which was one of the distinguishing traits of her face; or her finely chiselled aquiline nose, although it doubtless obscured the beauty of her complexion ; nor could rags mar the singular grace of her figure. There were others who marked these attractions besides the College students, among them one Madame Violante, well known at the time as a rope-dancer, who had a booth in George’s Lane, now Great George Street, and who stopped her one day as she was going along with her pail upon her head and asked her how she would like to learn to dance and wear fine dresses. Peggy’s answer need not be recorded. Madame accompanied her home, and there and then prevailed upon the mother to let her take the child as an apprentice. So Peggy left salad-crying and water-bearing and went away to the booth, where she learned to dance and speak French admirably. After a time Madame Violante added acting to the attractions of her establishment, and trained a company of children to play ‘The Beggar’s Opera.’ Woffington was the Polly, and, although only twelve years of age, acted and sang so charm-

ingly that she became not only the bright, particular star of the troupe, drawing crowds to the humble booth, but the talk of Dublin. Her next part was Nell in ‘The Devil to Pay,’ in which her success was even greater. Some persons of consequence who had seen her act, by-and-by prevailed upon Elrington, the manager of the Theatre Royal, to engage this youthful prodigy, and at thirteen she appeared as Polly Peachem upon the legitimate boards, with a success as great as she had achieved beneath the rope-dancer’s canvas. What a change! Who could have recognised the little ragged salad-girl in the beautiful, elegantly dressed, bewitching actress who was already turning all the male heads in Dublin? There she remained, playing the round both of tragic and comic characters, the Jane Shores, Monimias, Sylvias, Estifanias, Lady Townleys, with ever-increasing popularity, until she was twenty-two.

Desirous of triumphs in a yet more brilliant arena, she came to London, and sought an interview with Rich. Nineteen times did she call, and the answer was ‘engaged.’ On the twentieth, it occurred to her for the first time to send up her name, and she was immediately admitted. She found the eccentric father of pantomimes lolling upon a sofa, a play-book in one hand, a cup of tea in the other, while around him were seven-and-twenty cats of different sizes, from the kitten who could just lap, to the grave and toothless Tom, the father of countless generations. Woffington’s fame had long since travelled across the Channel, and Rich at once engaged her at £9 a week. She made her first appearance at Covent Garden, in the October of 1740, as Sylvia in ‘The Recruiting Officer;’ and a little later in that part with which her name is indissolubly associated, Sir Harry Wildair. In it she took the town by storm. The author, who had said that the part died with Wilks, should have lived to see its glorious resurrection in Woffington. Such fire, such dash, such devilry, some people could not believe it was a woman. One young lady, imagining her to

be really a man, fell in love with her, and sent her a proposal of marriage.

It was at this time that Garrick was dangling about the side scenes of the patent theatres, dying to act, and eagerly seeking the acquaintance of every actor and actress of celebrity. Enraptured with lovely Peggy, he was quickly added to the list of her adorers. He did not plead in vain. In the first year of his engagement at Drury Lane, he and Woffington kept house together in Bow Street. But, as we have seen in a previous chapter ('David Garrick'), the lady was too lavish in her habits to please her careful lover. Such a venial fault, however, might have been pardoned, had there not been the graver one of infidelity behind. But all the rakes, wits, and fine gentlemen of the town were besieging the weak fortress. At length, one morning, at breakfast, Garrick told her it would be better for both that they should part. 'I have been wearing the shirt of Dejanira,' he said. 'Then throw it off at once,' retorted the lady, in that shrill harsh voice which was her great defect. 'From this moment I have done with you.' She returned all his presents, and required him to make a like restitution. He, however, kept back a pair of diamond shoe-buckles as a souvenir—his enemies insinuated on account of their value. It has been said that Garrick seriously entertained an idea of reforming this fair frailty and marrying her; indeed, that he had gone so far as to buy the ring and try it on. It was, perhaps, fortunate for both parties that the *amour* ended as it did.

She frequently visited Dublin in the London vacations. In 1751, by ten performances of four favourite parts, she drew £4,000. Connected with the theatre was a Beef Steak Club, which, like its English namesake, was composed of some of the most distinguished personages of the Irish capital. Ladies, of course, were not admitted; but the rule was broken in favour of the bewitching Peggy, who was unanimously elected President for the season. It may be

safely averred that the Beef Steaks had never had so delightful a chairman—that such wit, and mirth, and sparkling retort had never circulated at their table before. But it must not be supposed that it was only by rakes and fine gentlemen that her society was relished. The poor little Irish street-girl had cultivated her natural abilities by reading and accomplishments, and men the most eminent for learning and of the gravest habits sought her conversation, and were charmed by it.

But all the adulation which she was surrounded never turned Margaret Woffington's head ; and her love of pleasure never made her forgetful of her duties to the public as an actress. She, unlike too many other spoiled darlings, never wantonly disappointed her audience, and would rise from a sick-bed to keep faith with them. Her good-nature was frequently made the victim of others' caprices ; and when Quin and Barry, or Mrs. Cibber, took a fit of jealous sulks and pleaded indisposition, Woffington was invariably called upon to come to the rescue of the manager in one of her popular parts. At length she grew tired of being made a stop-gap, and declared she would no longer respond to these sudden announcements ; and she kept her word. One night Mrs. Cibber, on the old plea, declined to act ; Woffington was announced, and refused to appear. The next night the audience greeted her with a shower of hisses. Darting lightning upon them from her magnificent eyes she retired, and was only after great persuasion induced to go on again. Calmly advancing to the front, but with a look of defiant scorn, she said that she was quite willing to perform her part, but ‘which is it to be—on or off? It is for you to decide ; to me it is a matter of indifference.’ This bold speech had the desired effect. ‘On, on,’ was the reply, accompanied by a tremendous round of applause.

Woffington was a true artiste, who could on occasions sacrifice personal feelings to the general interests of the theatre. Although in possession of the first line of cha-

racters she frequently appeared in inferior *rôles* (even to her rival, Mrs. Cibber) to strengthen the castes. She would play for the benefit of the humblest performer ; and, says a contemporary, ‘She ever remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Peggy to all around her.’ ‘Her chief merits in acting, I think,’ says Davies, in his ‘Life of Garrick,’ ‘consisted in her representation of females of high rank and of dignified elegance, whose grace in deportment as well as foibles she understood and played in a very pleasing manner.’ ‘She only required a fine voice,’ remarks another, ‘to have excelled all the women in the world in amorous tragedy.’ She paid a visit to Paris to study French acting, more especially that of Dumesnil, who held a position there analogous to her own in England. The parts of high comedy, such as Sylvia, Lady Townley, Lady Betty Modish, Sir Harry Wildair, were her great successes ; but she was excellent also as Jane Shore, Hermione, Isabella, Monimia ; in tragedy, however, her bad voice was much against her. Her fine figure and dashing style, which so admirably fitted her for what are technically called ‘the breeches parts,’ once induced her to essay Lothario in ‘The Fair Penitent,’ but the tragedy rake did not suit her so well as the comedy.

Her family shared in her prosperity, and old Mrs. Woffington was to be seen about Dublin in a velvet cloak, diamond ring, and with her agate snuff-box in her hand, expatiating upon her Peggy’s greatness and goodness. Her younger sister, Polly, she had sent to France to be educated, and a very charming and accomplished young lady she grew up, little inferior to her famous sister ; she captivated the nephew of Lord Cholmondeley, and he married her. My lord was terribly disgusted at first, but upon being introduced to Margaret, he told that siren that *she* had reconciled him to the match. ‘My lord,’ she answered coldly, and not at all dazzled by the compliment, ‘I have much more reason to be offended with it than you; for before I had but one beggar to maintain, now I have two.’ The children of this pair

married into the families of Townshend and Bellingham, who are thus, like so many other noble houses, connected by blood ties with the stage. Her career was but a short one, and its end was a sad contrast to its early brilliancy. Before she was forty her health began to fail : the final break-up was strangely dramatic. It must be described in the words of an eye-witness, Tate Wilkinson :

' Monday, May 17, 1757. "As You Like It" was acted at Covent Garden. I was standing at the wing as Mrs. Woffington in Rosalind, and Mrs. Vincent in Celia, were going on the stage in the first act. . . . She went through Rosalind for four acts without my perceiving she was in the least disordered, but in the fifth she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted. I thought she looked softened in her behaviour and had less of the *hauteur*. When she came off, at the quick change of dress, she again complained of being ill ; but she got accoutred and returned to finish the part. When in the epilogue she arrived at, "If I were among you I would kiss as many as had beards that pleased me," her voice broke, she faltered, endeavoured to groan, but could not, then in a voice of tremor screamed, "O God ! O God !" tottered to the stage-door speechless, where she was caught. The audience of course applauded until she was out of sight, and then sank into awful looks of astonishment, both young and old, before and behind the curtain, to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favourite principal actress, and who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death, in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being then about forty-four. She was given over that night, and for several days, yet so far recovered as to linger till near the year 1760, but existed as a mere skeleton, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."'

A comic genius was CATHERINE CLIVE. Born in 1711, she was the daughter of an Irish gentleman, who, after ruining

himself in the service of James II., accepted a commission under Louis XIV.; having obtained a pardon, he returned to England, and married the daughter of a London citizen, of which marriage Catherine was one of the issue. When quite a girl she sang so pleasantly and spiritedly that some friends suggested the stage, and gave her an introduction to Colley Cibber, who engaged her at a small salary. Her first appearance as an actress was in 1728, as a page in the tragedy of 'Mithridates.' It was not until 1731 that her full powers were brought to light. It was in that year that Coffey's still well-known farce of 'The Devil to Pay' was first produced, and it was as Nell, a part which was once a favourite with all actresses of coarse comedy, that she astonished the town with such a display of comic genius as it had never before witnessed. In 1732 she married the brother of Baron Clive; but they could not agree, and soon separated. Yet throughout her life not even the finger of scandal was ever pointed at her. Fielding, in his dedication to 'The Intriguing Chambermaid,' tells how she supported her aged father, and calls her the best wife, the best daughter, the best sister, and the best friend. But she had a temper. Wilkinson says: 'She was the terror of poets, managers, actors, actresses, and musicians—oh, rare Kitty!' 'Madam,' said Garrick to her one day, 'I have heard of tartar and brimstone, but you are the cream of the one, and the flower of the other.' She was passionate and vulgar, but her heart was always open to the unfortunate, and she would supply their wants without pride and ostentation. She and Garrick were always at loggerheads. She was eminent on the London stage before he appeared, and she never forgave him eclipsing her, as he did all others. One night when he was performing King Lear, she came to the side scenes to carp at his acting, but was so deeply affected that she sobbed one minute and abused herself the next, until at length, entirely overcome, she hurried away, exclaiming splenetically:

‘D—n him ! I believe he could act a gridiron.\* She was at times maliciously spiteful to him ; when he entered the green-room dressed for Barbarossa, in a glittering silver tissue shape, she called out : ‘ Make room for the royal lamplighter ?’ which jest disconcerted him for the remainder of the night, as she was perfectly aware it would. Yet, when she had quitted the stage, and all rivalry had ceased between them, her good heart did full justice to his merits, and no one was louder in praise of him.

‘ In the height of the public admiration for you,’ she wrote to him, ‘ when you were never mentioned but as the Garrick, the charming man, the fine fellow, the delightful creature, both by men and ladies ; when they were admiring everything you did and everything you scribbled, at this very time, I, *the Pivy*,† was a living witness that they did not know, nor could they be sensible, of half your perfections. I have seen you, with your magic hammer in your hand, endeavouring to beat your ideas into the heads of creatures who had none of their own. I have seen you, with lamb-like patience, endeavouring to make them comprehend you, and I have seen, when that could not be done, I have seen your lamb turned into a lion ; by this, your great labour and pains, the public was entertained ; *they* thought they all acted very fine, but they did not see you pull the wires. . . While I was under your control, I did not say half the fine things I thought of you because it looked like flattery, and you know your Pivy was always proud ; besides, I thought you did not like me then, but now I am sure you do, which makes me send you this letter.’ ‘ Her comic abilities,’ writes Davies, ‘ have not been excelled, nor indeed scarcely equalled, by any performer, male or female, these fifty

\* What stronger proofs of Garrick’s superlative genius could be afforded than by such unwilling testimonies—than by the answer of his enemy Murphy to the question as to what he was like? ‘ In private life he was a mean, contemptible little fellow, but on the stage—great God !’

† A pet name Garrick used to call her by.

years. What Colley Cibber said of Nokes, was equally applicable to her, for like him she had such a fund of comic force about her that she had little more to do than to perfect herself in the words of a part, and leave the rest to nature. Her characters ranged from high-bred ladies to vulgar Mrs. Heidelberg, and included country-girls, romps, hoydens, dowdies, and viragos. To a strong and melodious voice she added all the sprightliness requisite to a number of parts in ballad farces. Her mirth was so genuine, that whether it was restrained to the arch sense and the suppressed half laugh, widened to a broad grin, or extended to the downright honest burst of loud laughter, the audience were sure to accompany her. Happy was the author who could write a part equal to her abilities! She not only, in general, exceeded the writer's expectations, but all that the most enlightened spectator could conceive. I should as soon expect to see another Butler, Rabelais, or Swift, as another Clive.' Like many comic geniuses, her penchant was for tragedy, and with a face and figure entirely unsuitable would play Zara, Portia, even Ophelia. 'The applause she received in Portia,' says the *Dramatic Censor*, 'was disgraceful both to herself and the audience.' She murdered the blank verse with a harsh, dissonant voice, and always turned the last scene into burlesque by mimicking some famous lawyer of the day. Much of her spite against Garrick probably arose from his objecting to her appearance in such unsuitable characters.

She took leave of the stage in 1769, as Flora in 'The Wonder,' and the Fine Lady in 'Lethe.' Garrick made several overtures to induce her to change her mind, but she received them very rudely, and peremptorily refused. 'I hate hypocrisy,' she said, 'for I am sure you would light up candles with joy at my leaving, but for the expense.' She now took up her abode at Twickenham, where she was the near neighbour and friend of Horace Walpole. Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard became very corpulent in the last years of

their career. One night they were performing the characters of Lady Easy and Edging, in ‘The Careless Husband.’ In the part where my lady desires the maid to take up a letter which is dropped upon the stage, Mrs. Clive (who could as well have taken up the monument) cried out, ‘Not I, indeed! take it up yourself, if you like it.’ This threw an equal embarrassment on the other; which the audience seeing began to titter. At last Mrs. Pritchard, with great presence of mind, replied, ‘Well, Madam Pert, since you won’t take up the letter, I must get one that will,’ and rang for an attendant to do what neither could do for herself.

A scarcely less famous name even than Clive is that of MRS. ABINGTON, the original Lady Teazle. Gainsborough’s charming picture has made that saucy, piquant face familiar to every person who looks into a printseller’s windows. A strange romance might be woven out of her chequered career, without deviating from reality. Her father, who had once been a soldier, was a cobbler, or something of the kind, in Vinegar Yard, when Fanny Barton was born, about 1737. At first she sold flowers in the streets; then, having in some way acquired the taste, recited in taverns. Frequently of an evening the waiter at the Bedford would ask the company if they would like to hear a clever little girl recite passages from Shakespeare. If permission was granted she would be brought in and stood upon the table, and when she had finished, a few pence would be collected for her. At one time she seems to have been in the service of a French milliner, where she acquired some knowledge of the French language. But her ordinary life was one of squalor, misery—and worse. During Theophilus Cibber’s short career at the Haymarket, in 1755, we find Miss Barton announced for Miranda, in ‘The Busy Body,’ ‘being her first essay,’ the play-bill says; she played several other parts, Desdemona, and Sylvia in ‘The Recruiting Officer,’ among the number. The next year she was engaged at Drury Lane, where she remained three seasons almost unrecog-

nised ; for what chance of good parts had a novice in such a galaxy of great actresses as then adorned that stage ? In 1759 she married a musician of the orchestra, named Abington. But in a little time they separated by mutual consent. In 1760 she made her appearance at Smock Alley Theatre, Dublin. Here her success was immediate and assured ; she delighted the viceregal city as Kitty in ‘ High Life Below Stairs,’ and drew crowded houses to see her as Lady Townley. By this time, goodness knows how, the poor little waif of Vinegar Yard had developed into an educated and accomplished woman, who could converse fluently in French and Italian, with a taste so exquisite that she was the accepted leader of fashion, and the Abington Cap became all the rage among the Irish ladies. Five years she remained the darling of Dublin, then, Clive and Pritchard having retired, she yielded to Garrick’s repeated invitations, and returned to Drury Lane. She brought thither her Irish prestige and fame ; her dress, her style, her very walk were copied, her every movement upon the stage, so replete with grace, was watched by every female eye with despairing envy and admiration. Ladies of the first fashion consulted her upon their dress, not from mere caprice but from a decided conviction that her judgment was perfect in blending the beautiful and the becoming. She was not handsome, as we may perceive by her portraits ; her complexion was pale—and she never painted—her features irregular, with *le nez retroussé*. But her figure was particularly elegant, her eye bright and sparkling, and every feature was full of vivacity. She was on the stage thirty years, but it was said of her that she was twenty-one when she came upon it, and twenty-one when she left it.

Of all Garrick’s female plagues, she was the greatest. Recriminatory letters were constantly passing between them ; she several times sent in her resignation, but she knew her value too well to believe that it would be accepted. Perhaps he never wrote of any person such bitter words as these :

'That most worthless creature, Abington, she is below the thoughts of any honest man ; she is as silly as she is false and treacherous.'\* From 1782 to 1790 she played at Covent Garden, then quitted the stage for seven years. When she returned to it, her figure had lost much of its grace in a more matronly appearance. She took no formal leave of her profession, but her last appearance was in the closing year of the century, when she played Lady Racket in '*Three Weeks after Marriage*,' for Miss Pope's benefit. Yielding to the fashionable vice of the time she had gambled away a large portion of her earnings, yet passed her latter years in comfort and respect. Taylor tells us how he saw this once fascinating leader of fashion in her old age, attired in a red cloak and looking very like an inferior tradesman's wife. She died in 1815, and is buried in St. James's, Piccadilly. Boaden says that she was the most brilliant satirist of her sex ; that in her Beatrice there was more *enjouement* than in any other he had ever seen ; that she saw nature through a highly-refined medium, and never descended to be vulgar. Walpole considered her not only equal to any actress he had ever seen, but to all likely to succeed her. Her repertory was a wide one : she played Miss Hoyden and Desdemona, Ophelia and Olivia, Polly Peachem and Portia, Mrs. Termagant and Lydia Languish. But the part in which she is chiefly remembered is Lady Teazle. She and King must have acted marvellously together ; Boaden said they were so suited to each other that they lost half their soul in separation. In her rendering of the character, however, she gave no hint of the lady's rustic breeding, but was the fine lady throughout, in which Mrs. Jordan differed from her in conception, as have many actresses since. 'So various and unlimited are her talents,' said Davies, 'that she is not confined to females of a superior

\* Yet when the passions and spleen of the moment had passed away, she could add another testimony to his greatness. '*Shakespeare*,' she said, '*was made for Garrick, and Garrick for Shakespeare*'.

class ; she can descend occasionally to the country girl, the romp, the hoyden, and the chamber-maid, and put on their various airs, humours, and whimsical under-parts ; she thinks nothing low that is nature : nothing mean or beneath her skill which is characteristic.'

MISS POPE was Clive's legitimate successor in broad comedy, and transmitted to a later generation some of that fine actress's style and excellence. She was Kitty's *protégée*, and was favoured with her counsel and instruction. She played as a child with Garrick, and her name occurs in the Drury Lane play-bills as early as 1757, in the original caste of his farce of 'Lilliput.' In 1759, we find her playing Corinna in "The Confederacy," in which, although little more than fourteen years of age, she was so greatly applauded that her good friend Clive considered it necessary to warn her against being too much elated by approbation that was rather rendered to her youth than to her abilities. She was the original Mrs. Candour. She did not take leave of the stage until 1808, and died in 1818, at seventy-five years of age.

With her we must take leave of this period, although the list of its celebrities is by no means exhausted. It was the grandest in theatrical annals ; never before or since did so many fine actors flourish in the same space of time, or was the actor's art so profoundly studied and so well understood, and it is impossible to deny that the glory of such results is principally due to that one incomparable genius, DAVID GARRICK.

## PART III.

### *THE KEMBLE PERIOD.*



#### CHAPTER VI.

##### THE KEMBLE FAMILY—MRS. SIDDONS.

The founders of the family—The life of a stroller—Roger Kemble's children—A juvenile prodigy—Sarah Kemble's love-story—Married—Early struggles—Her London *début*—Failure—Bath—‘Three Reasons’—Return to London—Preparing for the event—A furore—An Irish skit—Scotch obtuseness—At an evening party—Studying Lady Macbeth—Stage tradition—Her arrogance and avarice—Unpopularity—In private life—Time the destroyer—Hazlitt upon her acting—Anecdotes of its extraordinary effects—Her great characters—Final performances—Retirement—Death.

FROM Ward, who was Roger Kemble's father-in-law, and an actor under Betterton, to Mrs. Scott Siddons, who still graces the stage, we have five successive generations of a family some member of which has been attached to the theatrical profession. This is an astonishing sequence, embracing as it does a period of quite 200 years, and has probably no parallel.

Ward was a strolling manager when Roger Kemble, who united hair-dressing with acting, eloped with his daughter, a great beauty, who had once been tempted by a coronet. The young couple started in management upon their own account, and strolled from town to town and village to village,

after the manner and under the difficulties and disadvantages of the time ; at some places they were received with gracious favour, at others treated like lepers and threatened with the stocks and whipping at the cart's tail, according as the great people were liberal-minded or puritanical.

A curious chapter in the history of humanity might be gathered from the annals which the strolling players of the last century, Tate Wilkinson, Charlotte Charke, Ryley, John Bernard, and others have bequeathed us. They are full of humour and of a regret at once ridiculous and tragic. However amused we may be by the little vanities, comical shifts, and laughable stories they abound in, yet they leave a feeling of sadness with us.

Ryley, in his '*Itinerant*,' gives us a picture of a company of strollers entering Worcester, with bag and baggage, scenery and 'properties' as good as that of Scarron's in the '*Roman Comique*.' The manager has preceded his troupe and goes out to meet them. 'At the entrance of the town I observed a concourse of people collected round a four-wheeled carriage which moved slowly, and on its approach I found to my surprise it was "the property," and such an exhibition ! Had the carter endeavoured to excite a mob he could not have done it more effectually than by the manner in which he had packed the load. Some scenes and figures belonging to a pantomime lay on the top of the boxes, which were numerous and piled very high. To keep them steady he had placed a door, on which were painted in large characters, '*Tom's Punch House*,' in front of the waggon ; this soon gave a title to the whole. Upon the uppermost box, and right over the door, was a giant's head of huge dimensions, whose lower jaw, being elastic-hung, opened with every jolt of the carriage. By the side of this tremendous head rode a large mastiff, who, enraged at the shouts of the mob, barked and bellowed forth vengeance. The letters on the door had of course stamped it for a puppet-show, to corroborate which the impudent carter,

somewhat in liquor, had placed a paste-board helmet on his head, whilst with awkward gesticulation he thumped an old tambourine, to the no small amusement of the spectators. To finish the farcical physiognomy of this fascinating group, Bonny Long and his wife and nine children sat in the rear, Bonny in a large cocked hat, his wife with a child at her breast, wrapped in a Scotch plaid, and the other eight in little red jackets.'

The first child of Roger Kemble and his wife was born June 13th, 1755, at Brecon, was christened Sarah, and afterwards became the celebrated Mrs. Siddons. A boy followed, born at Prescott, in Lancashire, in 1757, and this was the John Philip Kemble known to us all. The old farm-house in which the latter event took place, it is said, is still standing. Then came Stephen in 1758, and other sons and daughters successively followed. All these were put upon the stage as soon as they were old enough to speak a few lines. Holcroft relates how the future great tragic actress was brought forward when a very little thing on her mother's benefit-night as a juvenile prodigy. The audience, however, did not appreciate her precosity. As years advanced, Mr. Roger Kemble's company, like that of Mr. Vincent Crummles, was almost entirely included under one patronymic. Sarah was sent to a day-school in each town where they sojourned; but at thirteen we find her playing Ariel in a room, or barn, behind the King's Head at Worcester, which boasted no other theatre; and four years later she was sustaining all the principal parts at Wolverhampton. She had grown to be a very beautiful girl, making great havoc among the hearts of susceptible squires, and including an earl among the list of her adorers. But in her father's company there was a handsome young fellow from Birmingham named Henry Siddons, whom she preferred to all her rich admirers. As Mr. and Mrs. Kemble had married against parental consent, of course they would not allow their daughter to choose for herself; they had their pride

and ambition, and strongly objected to an alliance with a poor player. So Henry Siddons was told the manager's daughter was not for him. But on his benefit night he revenged himself by reciting a poem of his own composition, in which he related to the audience the story of his hapless love, and thereby greatly won their sympathies—and a box on the ear from his inamorata's mother, who was listening at the side-scene in a great passion. This led to serious consequences. Siddons left the company, and Sarah went away in a fit of anger, hiring herself as lady's-maid to Mrs. Greathead, of Guy's Cliff, Warwickshire. There she did not remain long, for Roger and his wife finding her determined, and probably moved by the solicitations of their patrons, gave a reluctant consent to the marriage, and on the 6th of November, 1773, Sarah Kemble became Mrs. Siddons.

Soon afterwards the young couple joined the company of Crump and Chamberlain, well-known strolling managers in their day, at Cheltenham ; and here for the first time she showed her power as an actress, and achieved a great success as Belvidera. Her fame reached London, and Garrick sent King down to the Gloucestershire watering-place to take note of her abilities. He reported very favourably, and soon afterwards Parson Bates, of the *Morning Post*, pugilist, duellist, and critic, a well-known man of the day, took the same journey for a similar purpose, and brought back an equally warm eulogy upon her acting as Rosalind. Thereupon Garrick engaged her for Drury Lane at £5 a week. He was delighted at first sight by her beauty and elegant figure, gave her every encouragement, and in the green-room always placed her seat next to his, to the intense annoyance of the other ladies. Her first appearance was in a silent part—Venus, in a revival of the Jubilee Procession, in which she led by the hand little Tom Dibdin, who was Cupid, and supplied him with sweetmeats to keep him from crying. It was on the 29th of December, 1775, she made

her real *début*. Here is a copy of the play-bill for that evening :

## DRURY LANE.

(Not acted these two years.)

By His Majesty's Company, at the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane, this day will be performed,

## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE.

Shylock	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. King.
Gratiano	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Dodd.
Duke	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Brambey.
Gobbo	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Waldron.
Salarino	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Farren.
Antonio	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Reddish.
Lorenzo ( <i>with songs</i> )	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Vernon.
Launcelot ( <i>first time</i> )	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Parsons.
Salanio	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Fawcett.
Tubal	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Messink.
Bassanio	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mr. Bensley.
Jessica ( <i>with a song</i> )	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Miss Jarratt.
Nerissa	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	Mrs. Davis.
Portia (By a Young Lady), being her first appearance.								

'The young lady' was a failure. Portia was not suited to her, and she was so overpowered by nervousness that a naturally weak voice sank almost to a whisper ; her movements were awkward, her dress old, faded, and in bad taste, as it always was even in her great days ; there was nothing but a delicate, fragile figure, and a beautiful face to recommend her. Her second part was Epicene in Jonson's 'Silent Woman,' another unfortunate choice. In a notice of the performance the *Chronicle* pronounced her to be 'entirely destitute of natural fire.' Her third essay was in Parson Bates's 'Blackamoor Washed White,' which was damned on the first night, and caused a riot on the second, as much in consequence of the unpopularity of its author as its own demerits. The next morning the *Chronicle* said, 'All played well except Mrs. Siddons, who having no comedy in her nature, rendered that ridiculous which the author evidently intended to be pleasant.' After this she appeared in Mrs. Cowley's 'Runaway,' and as Mrs. Strickland in

‘The Suspicious Husband.’ Her last character was as Lady Anne to Garrick’s Richard ; here again nervousness paralysed all her powers, she forgot certain directions he had given her at rehearsal, and was reprimed for her forgetfulness by a glance from those terrible eyes that nearly made her faint with terror. One of the newspapers the next morning pronounced the performance ‘lamentable.’ Five nights afterwards Garrick took leave of the stage, and the season closed. He promised to recommend her to Sheridan for the next. Sheridan used afterwards to declare that he took an opposite course and depreciated her, but the great manager’s word was not always to be relied upon. Mrs. Siddons ever after nursed a grudge against Garrick ; he had used her as a cat’s-paw against the overweening arrogance of Mrs. Abington, Crawford, and Miss Younge ; he was jealous of her, she said. There was probably some truth in the first part of the accusation, but the second is ridiculous ; it is probable that he really believed her talents to be only mediocre, a belief shared in by all his company, Mrs. Abington alone excepted, who called them all ‘fools’ in their judgment. The applause of provincial audiences had so inflamed the young actress’s vanity that she believed she would take London by storm ; but her powers were not then ripe, and it must be remembered that a most unhappy selection of parts had been made for her.

‘It was a stunning and cruel blow,’ she says, ‘overwhelming all my ambitions, and involving peril even to the subsistence of my helpless babes. It was very near destroying me. My blighted prospects, indeed, produced a state of mind that preyed upon my health, and for a year and a half I was supposed to be hastening to a decline.’ Her next engagement was at Manchester, and thence she went to York to Tate Wilkinson. There ‘all lifted up their eyes in astonishment that such a voice and such a judgment should have been neglected by a London audience.’ In 1778 John Palmer, on Henderson’s recommendation,

engaged her for Bath, at that time the first theatre out of London, at £3 a week. In her first parts, Lady Townley and Mrs. Candour—Lady Teazle being in possession of another lady—she was only coldly received, for in comedy she failed throughout her career, but in tragedy her success was at once assured. Four years did she remain in the Western city, and during that time made many friends in good society. Henderson acted with her and recommended her to Sheridan in the most enthusiastic terms, and the Duchess of Devonshire spread the fame of her talents wherever she went. Palmer was lessee of the Bristol, as well as of the Bath Theatre, and there were journeys backwards and forwards between the two cities to add to the ordinary professional drudgery. ‘When I recollect all this labour of mind and body,’ she writes, ‘I wonder I had the strength and courage to support it, interrupted as I was by the cares of a mother, and by the childish sports of my little ones, who were often most unwillingly hushed to silence for interrupting their mother’s studies.’

By-and-by there came an offer for one more trial at Drury Lane. But her former failure had left upon her mind so gloomy and bitter an impression, that she had constantly declared she would never again act in London. When she told Palmer of the offer and of her wish to decline it and remain with him, if he would give her some little advance upon her small salary of £3 a week, strange to say, although she was so great a favourite, he declined to do so. This refusal probably arose from personal feeling; Sarah Siddons was never liked behind the scenes, as we shall have many opportunities of seeing. On quitting Bath in May, 1782, she delivered a poetical address, in which she gave three reasons for quitting Bath. At the end of her speech she went to the wing and brought on her *three* children. She was very fond of the maternal pose, and frequently resorted to it. As a matter of course the three reasons were received with

tumultuous applause. The theatre was crammed; the receipts were £146, and the excitement was tremendous.

Even now Sheridan was only lukewarm about her, and her appearance was put off until the 10th of October. She was in town a fortnight beforehand, preparing and rehearsing in a torture of apprehension, for a second failure would have meant an eternal one, and probably the diminution of her provincial position. The play selected was Southerne's tragedy of '*Isabella, or the Fatal Marriage.*' At the rehearsals the old nervousness again deprived her of voice, until excitement and encouragement gave her strength. Two days before the dreaded night she was seized with hoarseness, but happily it passed away. 'On the eventful day,' she writes, 'my father arrived to comfort me, and be a witness of my trial. He accompanied me to my dressing-room at the theatre. There he left me, and I, in one of what I call my desperate tranquillities which usually impress me under terrific circumstances, there completed my dress, to the astonishment of my attendants, without uttering one word, though often sighing most profoundly.' Her husband had not the courage to enter the theatre, but wandered about the streets, or hovered near the playhouse in an agony of suspense. The house was filled, and she was received with a hearty round of applause. 'The awful consciousness,' she says, 'that one is the sole object of attention to that immense space, lined, as it were, with human intellect from top to bottom and all around, may be imagined, but can never be described, and by me can never be forgotten.' All doubts, however, were soon set at rest. Her beautiful face and form, the exquisite tones of her voice, her deep tenderness, seized upon every heart, and, as the tragic story advanced, her overwhelming agony thrilled every soul as it had never been thrilled before. Men wept, women fell into hysterics, transports of applause shook the house, the excitement and enthusiasm were almost terrible in their intensity, and the curtain fell amidst such acclamations as perhaps

even Garrick had never roused. In striking contrast with this tumultuous triumph is the home picture that follows : 'I reached my own quiet fireside on retiring from the scene of reiterated shouts and plaudits. I was half dead, and my joy and thankfulness were of too solemn and overpowering a nature to admit of words, or even tears. My father, my husband, and myself sat down to a frugal meat supper in a silence uninterrupted except by exclamations of gladness from Mr. Siddons. My father enjoyed his refreshments, but occasionally stopped short, and laying down his knife and fork, lifting up his venerable face, and throwing back his silver hair, gave way to tears of happiness. We soon parted for the night, and I, worn out with continually broken rest and laborious exertion, after an hour's retrospection, fell into a sweet and profound sleep which lasted to the middle of the next day.'

The clubs and newspapers were enthusiastic in her praise. The next night the very lobbies were crammed with people of the first fashion ; and she was removed from the little shabby tiring-room which had been assigned her to what had been Garrick's own splendid dressing-room ! Then came the rush. Seats in the boxes not being to be had, ladies hazarded their lives by struggling to gain admittance to the pit. The street in which she lodged was daily crowded with the carriages of the aristocracy ; the parties to which she was invited were packed to suffocation. 'This actress,' says Davies, 'like a resistless torrent, has borne down all before her. Her merit seems to have swallowed up all remembrances of present and past performers. . . . The actors assure me that farces that used to raise mirth in an audience after a tragedy, now fail of that effect from Mrs. Siddons having so absolutely depressed their spirits that the best comic actors cannot dispel the gloom.' She appeared in rapid succession as Calista, Jane Shore, Belvidera, Zara, and Euphrasia, with ever-increasing success. Mrs. Yates, at the other house, entered the field against her in 'The

'Grecian Daughter,' but to no purpose; to the mass of theatre-goers there was only one actress in the world, and that was Sarah Siddons! She was divine, angelic, more than human! Some of the newspaper critics were more judicious, and pointed out that her grief in *Isabella* was a little monotonous, that, although the middle and lower notes of her voice were sweet, the higher tones were rather broken and discordant, and that she was deficient in the expression of horror, rage, and fury. The salary agreed upon for her services had been five pounds a week, but before the end of the season she was receiving twenty pounds, besides two clear benefits. For her first benefit, a hundred barristers of the Temple subscribed a guinea each. Altogether, for the season, she must have realised about £1,500.

Upon the close of Drury Lane she went over to Dublin to 'star.' She was opposed at the Crow Street Theatre by a formidable rival, Mrs. Crawford, who, as the wife of the once supreme favourite Barry, had been enormously popular. The Dublin people rallied around their old love, preferring her to the younger actress. Mrs. Siddons' visit to the Irish capital was not satisfactory; she hated the place and the people, and her opinions oozing out were quite sufficient to render her unpopular. The press wrote her down, and ridiculed the emotion her performances excited. One of these skits is worth transcribing:

'On Saturday, Mrs. Siddons, about whom all the world has been talking, exposed her beautiful adamantine, soft, and comely person, for the first time, in the Theatre Royal, Smock Alley. The house was crowded with hundreds more than it could hold, with thousands of admiring spectators that went away without a sight . . . She was nature itself—she was the most exquisite work of art . . . Several fainted, even before the curtain drew up. . . . The fiddlers in the orchestra blubbered like hungry children crying for their bread and butter, and when the bell rang for music between the acts, the tears ran from the bassoon-player's eyes in such showers that they choked the finger-stops, and, making a spout of the instrument, poured in such a torrent upon the first fiddler's book, that, not seeing the overture was in two sharps, the leader of the band actually played it in two flats; but the sobs and sighs of the groaning audience, and the noise of the corks

drawn from the smelling-bottles, prevented the mistake being discovered, . . . The briny pond in the pit was three feet deep, and the people that were obliged to stand upon the benches were in that position up to their ankles in tears. An Act of Parliament to prevent her playing will certainly pass, for she has infected the volunteers, and they sit reading ‘The Fatal Marriage,’ crying and roaring all the time. May the curses of an insulted nation pursue the gentlemen of the college, the gentlemen of the bar, and the peers and peeresses that hissed her on the second night. True it is that Mr. Garrick never could make anything of her, and pronounced her below mediocrity; true it is the London audience did not like her. But what of that?

Edinburgh more than recompensed her for these mortifications. Yet on the first night the house, although crammed, was freezing; during scene after scene the audience sat mute, and after one of her greatest efforts a single voice exclaimed from the pit, in a tone of judicial calmness, ‘That’s nae sae bad!’ this was sufficient to break the spell, and a thunder of applause followed. But on her second visit the Scotch went as mad as the Londoners. In one day 2,557 people applied for the 650 seats at the disposal of the management; the doors were besieged at noon, and footmen took their stand at the box-entrance as soon as the play was over to secure their master’s places for the following night. Even the church synod arranged its meetings according to her performances.

The *furore* she had created in London continued to increase. She was painted as the Tragic Muse, and the great artist inscribed his name upon the hem of the dress; she gave readings at the Palace before the Royal Family, and became the attraction at every fashionable assembly. But to be made a show of was not congenial to her dignity, and she declined all invitations from strangers, making an exception in favour of a Miss Monkton, the lady assuring her there would be only some half-dozen guests present. After remaining a short time she was about to depart, when there arrived such an influx of company that she found it impossible to escape. She sat in an indescribable state of mortification until the early hours of the morning, stared at and

interrogated, while some of the people stood on chairs to obtain a glimpse of her.

On the 2nd of February, 1784, she played Lady Macbeth for the first time in London.

Let us go back to the period when, little more than a girl, she first studied the part, and listen to her own account of it : ‘ It was my custom to study my characters at night, when all the domestic cares and business of the day were over. On the night preceding that in which I was to appear in this part for the first time, I shut myself up as usual, when all the family were retired, and commenced my study of Lady Macbeth. As the character is very short, I thought I should soon accomplish it. Being then only twenty years of age, I believed, as many others do believe, that little more was necessary than to get the words into my head, for the necessity of discrimination and the development of character, at that time of my life, had scarcely entered into my imagination. I went on with tolerable composure in the silence of the night (a night I never can forget), till I came to the assassination scene, when the horrors of the scene rose to a degree that made it impossible for me to get farther. I snatched up my candle, and hurried out of the room in a paroxysm of terror. My dress was of silk, and the rustling of it, as I ascended the stairs to go to bed, seemed to my panic-struck fancy like the movement of a spectre pursuing me. At last I reached my chamber, where I found my husband fast asleep. I clapt my candlestick down upon the table, without the power of putting the candle out, and I threw myself on my bed, without daring to stay even to take off my clothes. At peep of day I rose to resume my task, but so little did I know of my part when I appeared in it at night, that my shame and confusion cured me of procrastinating my business for the remainder of my life.’

Of her performance of this character I have already given some account, contrasting it with that of Mrs. Pritchard

But there is a story told of the sleep-walking scene that well depicts the theatrical feeling of the time. Mrs. Pritchard had held the taper in her hand throughout the scene ; Mrs. Siddons determined to place it on a table as soon as she entered, that she might go through the pantomime of washing her hands, a piece of business that had never yet been done. Sheridan strongly opposed the idea ; it would never do, he said : the audience would not stand such an innovation ; it would damn the whole performance. But she would not give in. Even at the last moment, when she was dressing for the part, and had given orders that no one was to approach her room, he insisted upon seeing her, and again expostulated upon the danger of the proposed change. When she set down the taper a sensation went through the audience, but they were too spell-bound by the wonderful acting to heed the innovation. Such conservatism would seem ridiculous at the present day ; yet it indicated an artistic appreciation and a jealous love of art in which there was much that was commendable.

Her second visit to Dublin, although she was a constant guest of the Lord Lieutenant's and was everywhere received like a royal personage, produced greater mortification even than her first. Her haughtiness and insolence made her many enemies. Artists were eager to paint her picture, but she declined to sit ; she had not time even for Sir Joshua, she answered ; and when a painter, nettled at her arrogance, made her a brusque reply, she boxed his ears ! A merchant of high standing expressed to Siddons a wish to be introduced to his wife. Siddons replied he would see what he could do, but he did not know how to break the matter to her ! She was at daggers drawn with Daly, the manager, and all the newspapers attacked her. Asked to play for a benefit for West Diggles, who was paralysed and in indigence, she refused on the plea that she had promised to perform on the night named for the Marshalsea prisoners. A burst of indignation came from the press—and then, through her

husband, she offered the disabled actor her services. She charged poor Brereton, who was in a similar plight, twenty pounds for playing for his benefit—and made a great virtue of doing it for that ; and afterwards insisted upon his acknowledging in the public prints the favour she had done him. Reports of her avarice and uncharitableness were soon wafted across the Channel, and excited so much popular indignation that upon her reappearance at Drury Lane as Mrs. Beverley she was received with groans and hisses ; the audience would not have her, and John Kemble was at length obliged to lead her off the stage, when she fainted in his arms. Upon order being restored she returned, made a cleverly-worded defence, and was allowed to proceed with the performance. Describing the scene in a letter to a friend, she says : ‘ Envy, malice, detraction, all the fiends of hell have compassed me round to destroy me ; but for my children I would never appear again.’ Those children were an excuse for everything, for her parsimony, and above all for her inauguration of that pernicious system of strolling throughout the summer in provincial theatres, which has done so much to destroy the dignity of the profession. Before her time, a London actor of repute would have considered such strolling or starring a degradation, but it is now practised even on the political stage. She had no charity even for her own flesh and blood. Years after these events when she was starring in Manchester, her son Henry wished her to play for his benefit, but afraid to ask her himself he requested the manager to hand her a letter ; ‘ She will be offended if I intrude upon her,’ he said. Queen Siddons sent for him, and haughtily demanded how he could venture to propose such a thing. ‘ I thought, madam,’ he said, very humbly, ‘ that as Saturday was a vacant night——’ ‘ I dine with the Bishop of Llandaff that evening, and cannot comply with your request,’ she interrupted sharply ; ‘ good-evening, sir.’

Avarice was a family failing. While starring in Liverpool,

John Kemble promised to go over to York to play one night for his old manager, Tate Wilkinson, for thirty guineas ; but when he found the town all in excitement at the announcement, and that there was likely to be a crowded house, he refused to appear under half the receipts. After her retirement from the stage she again refused to act for her son, for a less consideration than half the receipts and a clear benefit, although at the time he was in great difficulties.

Under date 1787, Fanny Burney describes in her Diary her first introduction at a party to Mrs. Siddons in private life : ‘I found her,’ she says, ‘the heroine of a tragedy—sublime, elevated and solemn ; in face and person truly noble and commanding ; in manners, quiet and stiff ; in voice, deep and dragging ; and in conversation, formal, sententious, calm, and dry. I expected her to have been all that is interesting ; the delicacy and sweetness with which she seizes every opportunity to strike and to captivate upon the stage had persuaded me that her mind was formed with that peculiar susceptibility which, in different modes, must give equal powers to attract and delight in common life. But I was very much mistaken. As a stranger, I must have admired her noble appearance and beautiful countenance, and have regretted that nothing in her conversation kept pace with their promise.’ It was thus she impressed every person. Sarah Siddons was rich in the *one* virtue which has been wanting in so many of her professional sisters—and in no other. She was a grand actress, but a disagreeable woman. Her prudery was excessive ; her boy’s dress in Rosalind was a nondescript costume which had no resemblance to that of man or woman, and her acting in the part was on an equality with her costume. One night as she was leaving the theatre Sheridan jumped into her carriage. ‘Mr. Sheridan,’ she said, in her most awful accents, ‘I hope you will behave with propriety, if not I shall have to call the footman to show you out of the carriage ;’ an

expostulation which was certainly more prudish than modest. Bold indeed would have been the man who would have taken the slightest liberty with this terrible tragedy queen.

As the years passed on she still advanced in fame and fortune. She had begun at £5 a week, by 1804 she had advanced to £20 a night, and thence, in 1811, to 50 guineas. She had purchased a house in Gower Street, the back of which she describes as being most effectually in the country, and most delightfully pleasant. What a change since those days! The limit of her ambition had once been £10,000; she had long since realised that sum more than twice over, but doubtless she would have still gone on accumulating more had there not come warnings that her days of greatness were waning. She had become very stout and unwieldy, and, although her age did not warrant it, so infirm that if she had to kneel in a part she could not rise without assistance. Her acting was becoming heavy, monotonous, and stagey; for much of this, however, the increased size of the theatres was responsible; the tenderness, the passion of her younger days had passed away with her youth and beauty, and the Isabella and Belvidera that once wrung every heart, over which Hazlitt confesses he had wept outright, had no affinity with that fat sombre woman, of whose awful demeanour, even in private life, so many stories have been told. Another luminary, young, beautiful, and sympathetic, Miss O'Neill, was rising to thrust her from her throne as she had thrust others. And so it became necessary to abdicate, and lay down the laurel crown she had worn so long ere it was rudely plucked from her head. 'I feel as if I were mounting the first step of a ladder conducting me to the other world,' she said sadly. Her farewell benefit took place on the 29th of June, 1812. *Lady Macbeth* was fitly chosen for her exit, and at the end of the sleep-walking scene a nobly appreciative audience insisted that the curtain should there fall, so that the last grand impression might not be disturbed. Yet her retirement did

not make the sensation that might have been expected. As it has been before said, her powers were failing, and privately the public disliked her. A volume might be filled with enthusiastic descriptions of her acting by contemporary writers.

'The homage she has received is greater than that which is paid to queens,' says Hazlitt, writing of her farewell. 'The enthusiasm she excited had something idolatrous about it; she was regarded less with admiration than with wonder, as if a being of a superior order had dropped from another sphere to awe the world with the majesty of her appearance. She raised tragedy to the skies, or brought it down from thence. It was something above nature. We can conceive of nothing grander. She embodied to our imagination the fables of mythology, of the heroic and deified mortals of elder time. She was not less than a goddess, or than a prophetess inspired by the gods. Power was seated on her brow; passion emanated from her breast as from a shrine. She was tragedy personified. She was the stateliest ornament of the public mind. She was not only the idol of the people, she not only hushed the tumultuous shouts of the pit in breathless expectation, and quenched the blaze of surrounding beauty in silent tears, but to the retired and lonely student, through long years of solitude, her face has shone as if an angel appeared from heaven; her name has been as if a voice had opened the chambers of the human heart, or as if a trumpet had awakened the sleeping and the dead. To have seen Mrs. Siddons was an event in everyone's life; and does she think we have forgot her?' 'To see the bewildered melancholy of Lady Macbeth walking in her sleep,' writes Leigh Hunt, 'or the widow's mute stare of perfect misery by the corpse of the gamester Beverley, two of the sublimest pieces of acting on the English stage, would argue this point (the greatness of her powers) better than a thousand critics. Mrs. Siddons has the air of never being an actress; she seems unconscious that there is a motley

crowd, called the pit, waiting to applaud her, or that a dozen fiddlers are waiting for her exit.'

Her 'Forgive me, but forgive me!' in *Jane Shore*, would convulse the house with sobs. Crabb Robinson, while witnessing her terrible performance in '*Fatal Curiosity*,' burst into a peal of laughter, and upon being removed was found to be in strong hysterics. Macready relates an equally remarkable instance of her power. In the last act of Rowe's '*Tamerlane*', when by the order of the tyrant Monesis, Aspasia's lover is strangled before her face, she worked herself up to such a pitch of agony that, as she sank a lifeless heap before the murderer, the audience remained for several moments awe-struck, then clamoured for the curtain to fall, believing that she was really dead, and only the earnest assurances of the manager to the contrary could satisfy them. Holman and the elder Macready were among the spectators, and looked aghast at one another. 'Macready, do I look as pale as you?' inquired the former. 'From the first moment to the last,' says Young, 'she was, according to theatrical parlance, in the character. The spectator was always carried along with her - wept when she wept, smiled when she smiled, and each motion of her heart became in turn his own. . . . I remember her coming down the stage, in 1789, in the triumphal entry of her son, *Coriolanus*, when her dumb-show drew plaudits that shook the building. She came alone, marching and beating time to the music; rolling (if that be not too strong a term to describe her motion) from side to side, swelling with the triumph of her son. Such was the intoxication of joy which flashed from her eyes, and lit up her whole face, that the effect was irresistible. She seemed to me to reap all the glory of that procession to herself. I could not take my eyes from her. *Coriolanus*, banner, and pageant, all went for nothing to me, after she had walked to her place.' Washington Irving did not see her until she was old and had lost all elegance of figure, yet, he says, she penetrated in a moment to his heart; she was

playing Calista, and froze and melted him by turns; a glance of her eye, a start, an exclamation thrilled his whole frame—he hardly breathed while she was on the stage, and she worked upon his feelings until he felt himself a mere child. She frequently produced the most astonishing effect upon the actors performing with her. In the last scene of ‘The Gamester’ one night, Young, who was playing Beverley, was so choked with emotion at her acting, that for a time he could not speak. In Queen Catherine, her glance at the Surveyor was so terrible that once an actor who was performing the part came off the stage terror-struck, and vowed that he would not encounter that look again for the world.

Her arrogant pride greatly increased with years. Irving said that she reminded him of one of Scott’s knights, ‘who carved the meat with their glaives of steel, and drank the red wine through their helmets barred.’ She would make the stipulation before promising to dine with a friend that no other person should be invited, and if by chance she found any visitors upon her arrival, would cast upon the host one of her most terrible glances and be rude and disagreeable all the evening. At one of her receptions she was observed standing next to the Duke of Wellington, silent, and with a haughty look upon her face waiting for him *to speak first*.

It must have been a great renunciation to have retired from those dazzling triumphs into the monotony of private life. As she sat at home in the long evenings she would say, ‘Now I used to be going to dress—now the curtain is about to rise.’ Her body was there, but her soul was still on the stage. In 1817, she reappeared as Lady Macbeth for her brother Charles’s benefit. But Macready, who was present, says, the performance only excited regret that she should have been prevailed upon to leave her retirement—that her acting was a mere repetition of the poet’s text without a single flash of ‘her pristine all-subduing genius.’ Yet even this was not her last appearance; in 1819 she

again appeared, on a similar occasion, as Lady Randolph. Macready witnessed this also. There was one gleam of the original brightness, he says, when, confronting Glenalvon's foul suspicion, she came to the lines :

“ “Thou look’st at me as if thou fain would’st pry  
Into my heart. . . .  
'Tis open as my speech.”

‘The effect was electric, and the house responded with peals of applause. But this was the last flicker of a dying flame.’

She received the homage of the great unto the last, and when she lodged in town, carriages were nearly all day drawn up before the door of her lodgings. She survived until the year 1831, still continuing to delight select and even royal circles with private readings from Shakespeare and Milton.

---

## CHAPTER II.

### JOHN PHILIP, STEPHEN, CHARLES AND FANNY KEMBLE.

John Philip intended for a priest—Forsakes the cassock for the buskin—Anecdotes of his strolling days—An old and young stager—At Dublin—First appearances in London—His Hamlet—Strange courtship and wedding—A bed of thorns—Old Drury demolished—The new theatre—Manager of Covent Garden—The fire—The O. P. riots—His farewell—His retirement—An analysis of his acting—Stephen—Charles—Fanny Kemble.

JOHN PHILIP KEMBLE whilst a child acted like the rest of his brothers and sisters, but after a time his father resolved to make a priest of him. Roger being a Catholic brought up the boys to that faith, while the mother being a Protestant had the girls educated in her own religion. So at ten years old the boy was sent away to Sedgley Park College, Wolverhampton. There he remained four years, and in 1771 proceeded to Douai, where he became famous as a declaimer

of tragic recitations, and for a prodigious memory, which never failed him through life. He once actually repeated fifteen hundred lines of Homer by heart. But the theatrical blood within him rebelled against the cassock, and burned for the sock and buskin. So he left the College in 1775, landed at Bristol, and proceeded to Brecknock, where his parents were then performing. Bitterly disappointed in his ambition, Roger refused to receive the disobedient son ; a subscription of a few shillings was raised among the company, to which the irate father was with difficulty induced to add a guinea, and with this pittance Kemble had the world before him. He started on foot for Wolverhampton, where his sister's late managers, Crump and Chamberlain, had opened the theatre. On the road he fell in with another wandering disciple of Thespis wending his way to the same town, and on Christmas Day these two found themselves at an inn without a penny in their pockets. They composed two letters, one in Latin to a parson, the other in English to a lawyer—charitable persons, we may presume, and known as such—in which they stated their destitute circumstances and solicited assistance. The appeal was responded to, and with the funds thus obtained the journey was completed. But upon their arrival at Wolverhampton one was received, the other rejected, and the rejected one was Kemble ; nevertheless on the 8th of January, 1776, Kemble appeared as Theodosius. He did not make a favourable impression, and was evidently what, in stage parlance, is called ‘a stick.’ But he was studious and painstaking, and made a progress in his art which, if not rapid, was sure. His stay at Wolverhampton was short ; he and the managers could not agree, and he threw up the engagement.

Lewis, the comedian, used to relate that while ‘starring’ some little time after this in a country town, he was greatly struck by a young man who was playing Lovewell in ‘The Clandestine Marriage,’ who although attired in a very ridiculous dress was so correct and gentlemanly in his acting

and bearing, that such shortcomings were lost sight of. He found him to be a Mr. John Kemble, and that he was associated with a person who exhibited tricks of legerdemain. Such was the life of the future great theatrical potentate for about two years, until his sister, in 1778, procured him an engagement at Liverpool ; in the same year, probably by the same recommendation, he joined Tate Wilkinson at York. There all the great leading parts were in possession of a veteran actor named Cummings, who played the gay Charles Surface at sixty. The audience pronounced Kemble ‘very good in his way, but nothing to Coomins ;’ against whose stentorian lungs he could not shout, and the press advised him, if he desired to attain eminence in his profession, to study that gentleman’s style. Once upon a ‘bespeak’ night a servant of the patron’s refused to go to the theatre because ‘that Kemble was playing one of Mr. Coomins’ parts.’ Poor Cummings’ end was a singular one ; while performing Dumont in ‘Jane Shore,’ just as he had uttered the line, ‘Be witness for me, ye celestial hosts !’ he staggered and dropped down dead upon the stage. Actors had much to endure in those days. There was a certain influential ‘lady’ at York who took a delight in insulting them upon the stage. One night, when Kemble was performing some tragic part, she disconcerted him so much by her loud laughter and ridicule, that he was compelled to address her and say he could not go on until she desisted. Some officers who were in the box with her cried out that she had been insulted, and demanded an apology. Kemble refused to make any. There was a great uproar, but he remained firm. The next day these gentlemen called upon the manager, and informed him that unless the actor was dismissed they and their friends would withdraw their patronage and compel their tradesmen to do likewise. Wilkinson replied spiritedly that he had always found Mr. Kemble a gentleman, that he considered he was in the right, and should not think of discharging him. Such a determination produced great excitement and astonish-

ment in the city, but after a time the Yorkists came over to the side of the actor, and the storm blew over. From York John Philip proceeded to Dublin. Here again he appears to have made little impression, for the Yorkists still remembered Barry, and were loath to accept any one in his place. He worked indefatigably, played a round of some thirty-eight characters belonging to every range of the drama, and although never esteemed in comedy parts, gradually won his way as a tragedian, until his performance as the Count, in Jephson's 'Count of Narbonne,' raised him to be an established favourite in the Irish capital.

It was in the season of 1783, that Mrs. Siddons' influence brought him to London. He made his first appearance on the 12th of September, as Hamlet. His reception in no degree approached that of his sister, and it brought forth much conflicting criticism upon his new readings, which were many and strange. The performance was eminently graceful, calm, deeply studied—during his life he wrote out the entire part forty times!—but cold and unsympathetic. Nevertheless, it was felt that a fine artist had appeared, and, with the exception of Henderson, he had at the time no rival in the highest walk of tragedy. 'Old playgoers,' says Dr. Doran, 'have told me of a grand delivery of the soliloquies of Hamlet, and mingled romance and philosophy in the whole character; an eloquent by-play, a sweet reverence for his father, a remembrance of the *Prince* with whatever companion he might be for the moment; of a beautiful filial affection for his mother, and of one more tender, which he could *not* conceal, for Ophelia.' Hazlitt complained of a want of flexibility in his performance of this character. 'There is a perpetual undulation of feeling in the character of Hamlet; but in Mr. Kemble's acting there was neither variableness, nor the shadow of turning. He played it like a man in armour, with a determined inveteracy of purpose, in one undeviating straight line.' But, when noticing his death the great critic writes more praisingly, 'there he was,

the sweet, the graceful, the gentlemanly Hamlet. The scholar's eye shone in him with learned beauty ; the soldier's spirit decorated his person ; the beauty of his performance was its retrospective air, its intensity and abstraction ; his youth seemed delivered over to sorrow. Later actors have played the part with more energy, walked more in the sun—dashed more at effect—piqued themselves more on the girth of a foil ; but Kemble's *sensible, lonely* Hamlet has not been surpassed.' Unlike his sister, who never exceeded the greatness of her first performances, and degenerated in her later years, Kemble was a progressive actor, constantly improving until the very last. But the old theatrical law of precedence which had hampered him with 'Coomins' at York, again kept him back at Drury Lane, where the principal tragic parts were in possession of 'Gentleman Smith.'

In 1787, Kemble married Brereton's young widow, *née* Hopkins. She survived him many years, dying at ninety, in 1845, and could boast of having been a member of Garrick's company. The courtship was very brief and very unromantic. He had always evinced a partiality for the young lady, even before her first marriage ; but one night, meeting her in the wing as he was coming off the stage, he cracked her under the chin, and with a pleasant smile, said, 'Pop, you may shortly learn something to your advantage.' 'Pop,' the familiar name by which Mrs. Brereton was known among her friends, ran to her mother, also an actress in the same theatre, and told her what had happened, with 'I wonder what he meant?' 'Why, he means to make you an offer of marriage, to be sure,' replied the old lady ; 'and you'll of course accept it.' Mrs. Hopkins was right, the offer was made, accepted, and the wedding quietly celebrated. When the ceremony was over, Mrs. Bannister, who was present, inquired of the bridegroom where he was going to dine. He did not know, he answered ; he supposed at home. The good lady invited them to her house. He accepted the invitation, then went away upon some business. He was so

late for dinner that they thought he had forgotten all about it. He took his wife to the theatre at night, and as he did not play himself, returned to spend the evening with her friends. After the play was over he fetched her home to his new house in Caroline Street, Bedford Square, and so ended the day.

In the next year he succeeded King as stage-manager. Since the death of Garrick, Drury Lane had been under the management of Brinsley Sheridan. Alas, what a falling off was there! To what a chaos that once admirably conducted establishment had been reduced years previous to the period at which we have now arrived. Sheridan's carelessness and impecuniosity had reduced the stage accessories to a condition which would now scarcely be tolerated in a booth at a fair. And Kemble set to work not only to renovate them, but to introduce into scenery and dresses an appropriateness never before attempted. Yet the first time he played Othello in London, it was in the full uniform of a British General; and he continued to appear in Macbeth with a hearse-like plume in his bonnet until Walter Scott plucked it out and substituted a single eagle's feather; while the celebrated singer, Mrs. Crouch, appeared as the first Singing Witch in powdered hair, fancy hat, and point lace. His new position was a bed of thorns; tradespeople refused credit unless he himself became answerable—sometimes Sheridan neglected to honour the debt, and once Kemble was arrested; the actors were unpaid and rebellious, and frequently refused to go on the stage until they received their night's salary; more than once even Kemble and his sister were driven to such degrading means to obtain money. One night, at a supper at Mrs. Crouch's, patience and temper being utterly exhausted, John Philip gave in his resignation; the words in which it was couched are highly characteristic. After much preliminary growling, he burst forth: 'I am an eagle, whose wings have been bound down by frosts and snows; but I now shake my pinions and cleave into the genial air unto

which I am born?" But Sheridan, who was his idol, and whose power over men was something marvellous, succeeded in again cajoling him.

Old Drury Lane was pulled down in 1791, and New Drury was opened March 12, 1794, with an Oratorio, the stage being splendidly set to represent a Gothic Cathedral. The dimensions of the house were : the opening of the curtain forty-three feet, height thirty-eight ; height from pit to ceiling fifty-six. The pit held 800 people, the boxes 1,828, the two shilling gallery 675, the one shilling 308 : total 3,611, and £1,771. The old house held about 2,000 people and £800. In 1796 Kemble gave up the management, and Wroughton succeeded him. He resumed the position, however, in 1800, under an agreement with Sheridan that he was to take a share of the profits ; but finding that the manager intended to evade the bargain, in disgust he once more, and this time for ever, in 1802, dissolved his connection with him. In the same year he bought Lewis's sixth share in Covent Garden for £23,000, borrowing half the money on interest. He was now in the very zenith of his fame ; from the time he had assumed the direction of Drury Lane he took the position of principal actor, and performed one after another that series of parts with which his name became identified — *Macbeth*, *King John*, *Wolsey*, *the Stranger*, *Rolla*, *Brutus*, *Cato*, and greatest of all, *Coriolanus*. He had mounted Garrick's throne, and there was none to dispute the sceptre with him. Before appearing at Covent Garden he paid a visit to Paris, where he was well received, although his reception could not compare with that of Garrick.

Within six years afterwards Covent Garden was burnt to the ground. Kemble and his sister lost all they possessed : 'Everything I had in the world of stage ornament,' she wrote to Lady Holland, 'is gone, and literally not one vestige is left of all that has cost me so much time and money to collect.' Boaden describes Kemble the morning

after the fire sitting before a glass gloomily pretending to shave, then suddenly bursting forth into soliloquy, bewailing the magnificent theatre that had perished, enumerating with auctioneering precision its various treasures, library, ward robe, scenery, and ending with ‘Of all this nothing now remains but the arms of England over the entrance of the theatre, and the Roman Eagle standing solitary in the market-place.’ But generous friends came to his assistance. The Duke of Northumberland pressed upon him a loan of £10,000, and on the day the foundation-stone of the new house was laid destroyed the bond. Within eight months the building was completed. But fresh troubles now beset him. On account of the great expenses of the new theatre Kemble considered himself justified in raising the prices of admission; the box price was advanced from six to seven shillings, the pit from three shillings and sixpence to four shillings, and a third tier of boxes were erected and let for £12,000 a year.

The announcement of these alterations made a great sensation out of doors, the newspapers grew virtuously indignant over the private boxes, and John Bull was aroused by the engagement of Madame Catalani, whose enormous salary, it was said, was the cause of the new tariff. The new theatre was opened on September 18th, with ‘Macbeth’ and ‘The Quaker.’ As Kemble, after ‘God save the King,’ stepped forward to speak the opening address, the storm burst. Barking of dogs, cat-calls, cries of ‘Off, off!’ ‘Old prices,’ resounded through the house. Not one word either of the address or the play was heard, and every actor and actress was hissed. The Riot Act was read from the stage, constables and soldiers were called in, but could not dislodge the disturbers. The newspapers next morning took the side of the rioters, and were filled with skits and satires upon Kemble and his sister. For six nights the performance was conducted in dumb-show, amidst groans, hisses, bugle-calls, and every variety of hideous cacophony.

Pugilists were sent into the pit, people were dragged to the police-office, but still the riot, far from being subdued, nightly increased in violence. After the sixth night Kemble arranged to refer the dispute to a committee, and announced that Madame Catalani had resigned her engagement. The committee selected was composed of the Solicitor-General, the Recorder of the City of London, and the Governor of the Bank of England. Their report set forth that during the last six years the yearly profits of the theatre had amounted to only 6 $\frac{2}{3}$  per cent. upon the capital, and that the proprietors had sustained a heavy loss by the late fire, on account of the property having been only partially insured. The receipts during those six years had been £365,983, the expenditure £307,912, and there were twelve shareholders in the patent. The house reopened on the 10th of October, but far from the report satisfying the public the riots recommenced with greater fury than before. Men wore the letters O.P. upon their hats and waistcoats, ladies wore O.P. medals; dustman's bells, watchmen's rattles, coachmen's horns, and a kind of Carmagnole, called the O.P. dance, drowned every word the actors spoke. After bravely struggling against these monstrous proceedings for sixty-one nights, Kemble was obliged to lower the pit to the old price, do away with the private boxes, stop all prosecutions, and dismiss his box-keeper, Brandon, whose only fault had been doing his duty.

The Kemble management certainly did not tend to the elevation of the stage ; the vast size of the new theatres, so different to the old, which were quite small, induced him to create that spectacular drama which has since swollen to such enormous dimensions. Splendid processions, real water, horses, elephants, dogs, too frequently possessed the stage. Even in these days we should not tolerate much that drew eager crowds to the patent houses when the Kembles and a host of other talent graced the boards. The

expenses of Covent Garden were £300 a night. Between 1809 and 1821 inclusive, the receipts were £1,000,000, which averaged £80,000 per season. In 1810-11 the receipts were £100,000, and for the first forty-one nights of 'Blue Beard' £21,000.

During the latter part of his career, Kemble was absent from the stage two years. When he returned, he was received with a great ovation, but, warned by increasing infirmities, the martyrdom he suffered from the gout, and, above all, by the success of Edmund Kean, he, in 1817, gave a round of his great parts: Pierre, Brutus, Cato, The Stranger, Lord Townley, Penruddock, Hotspur, Hamlet, Zanga, Wolsey, Octavian, Posthumus, to £600 houses. His last appearance was on June 23rd in the above year. 'Mr. Kemble took his leave of the stage on Monday night in the character of Coriolanus,' writes Hazlitt. 'On his first coming forward to pronounce his farewell address, he was received with a shout like thunder; on his retiring after it the applause was long before it subsided entirely away. There is something in these partings with old public favourites exceedingly affecting. They teach us the shortness of human life, and the vanity of human pleasures. Our associations of admiration and delight with theatrical performers are among our earliest recollections, among our last regrets. They are links that connect the beginning and the end of life together; *their* bright and giddy career of popularity measures the arch that spans our brief existence. . . . He played the part as well as he ever did—with as much freshness and vigour. There was no abatement of spirit and energy—none of grace and dignity; his look, his action, his expression of the character, were the same as they ever were: they could not be finer.' I continue the description of the scene from Mr. Fitzgerald's biography of 'The Kembles': 'Kemble seemed to put his whole soul into the part, and, it was noticed, seemed to cast away all unfavourable checks and reserves, as though there was no further

need for husbanding his strength. As he approached the last act a gloom seemed to settle down on the audience ; and when at the end he came forward slowly to make his address, he was greeted with a shout like thunder of 'No farewell !' it was long before he could obtain silence, or could control his feelings sufficiently to speak. At last he faltered out, " I have now appeared before you for the last time : this night closes my professional life." At this a tremendous tumult broke out, with cries of " No, no !" and after an interval he went on with the remainder of his speech. . . . At the end he seemed to hurry over what he had to say, to be eager to finish, and withdrew with a long and lingering gaze, just as Garrick had done. Some one handed a wreath to Talma, who was present on the occasion, to which was attached an inscription, bearing a request that Mr. Kemble would not retire, but would act at least a few times in the year, so long as his strength would allow him. Kemble, however, had withdrawn, but the manager (Fawcett) coming out, assured them that it should be his pride to present it to Mr. Kemble. But in the green-room he received an unexpected shape of homage, for all his brother artists begged from him the various articles of his theatrical dress as memorials. Mathews obtained his sandals, Miss Bristow his pocket-handkerchief, and, when he at last withdrew from the theatre, he found the entrances lined with all the assistants and supernumeraries, waiting to give him a last greeting. A grand dinner was given in his honour at the Freemason's Tavern, Lord Holland in the chair ; the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Duke of Bedford, and others of the highest nobility, together with the most eminent men in literature and art, were present. Not even Garrick had been so greatly honoured. His savings had been but moderate, and he found it necessary to sell his fine library, which realised £2,271, and his unique collection of old plays, which the Duke of Devonshire purchased for £2,000. These sales added £300 a year to his income. He left his

house in Great Russell Street, which was afterwards pulled down for the enlargement of the British Museum, and went abroad, first to Toulouse and afterwards to Lausanne, where he died in 1823. He had engaged a charming villa and was occasionally visited by old friends travelling. Once he returned to London for a short time, and from Hazlitt we obtain a last glimpse of the great actor in his decay : ‘ His face was as fine and as noble as ever, but he sat in a large arm-chair, bent down, dispirited, and lethargic. He spoke no word, but he sighed heavily, and after drowsing thus for a time, went away.’

It is doubtful whether, could John Kemble be resuscitated and brought back to the stage in all the fulness of his powers, a modern audience could appreciate him. ‘ When witnessing,’ writes Irving, ‘ the exertion of his powers, though my head is satisfied and even astonished, yet my heart is seldom affected. I am not led to forget that it is Kemble the actor, not Othello the Moor. Once, however, I must own, I was completely overpowered by his acting ; it was in the part of Zanga ; he was great throughout. His last scene with Alonzo was truly sublime ; Kemble seemed to have forgotten himself for a moment and to have found himself Zanga.’ His Cato was magnificent : ‘ the hope of Rome seemed fixed upon him in his tower-like person.’ But his Brutus was too meditative. In Coriolanus the mob fell back from him as though they had run against a wild bull, as he dashed in among them in haughty pride, looking sufficient to beat forty of them. And while waiting for Aufidius at the foot of the statue of Mars he looked another Mars. The distinguishing excellence of his acting may be summed up in the word *intensity*, in the seizing upon some one feeling or idea, in insisting upon it, with a certain graceful consistency, and conscious grandeur of conception, to a very high degree of pathos or sublimity. If he had not the unexpected bursts of nature and genius, he had all the regularity of art ; if he did not display the tumult and con-

flict of opposite passions in the soul, he gave the deepest and most permanent interest to the uninterrupted progress of individual feeling: and in embodying a high idea of certain characters, which belong rather to sentiment than passion, to energy of will than to loftiness or originality of imagination, he was the most excellent actor of his time. ‘John Kemble is a great artist,’ wrote Walter Scott, ‘but he shows too much of his machinery. I wish he could be double-capped, as they say of watches. *He is great in those parts where character is tinged by some acquired and systematic habit, like stoicism or misanthropy; but sudden turns and natural bursts of passion are not his forte.* I saw him in Sir Giles Overreach the other night, and he is not within two miles of Cooke.’ ‘His person was cast in the heroic mould, and as may be seen in Lawrence’s splendid portraits of him in Coriolanus, Hamlet, and Rolla, reached the most perfect ideal of manly beauty. But he had serious disadvantages to contend with in a very disagreeable voice, husky and untunable, and in a constitutional asthma that necessitated a prolonged and laborious indraught of his breath, and obliged him for the sake of distinctness to adopt an elaborate mode of utterance, enunciating every letter in every word. His limbs were not supple—indeed, his stately bearing verged on stiffness; and his style, more suited to the majestic, the lofty, and the stern than the pathetic, might not inaptly, in respect to his movements on the stage, be termed statuesque.’ Mrs. Siddons, speaking of him to Reynolds, the dramatist, said, ‘My brother John, in his most impetuous bursts, is always careful to avoid any discomposure of his dress or deportment; but in the whirlwind of passion I lose all thought of such matters.’

He was terribly pedantic. Leigh Hunt describes how he turned his head so slowly that people might have imagined he had a stiff neck, while his words followed so slowly that he might have been reckoning how many words he had got by heart. The actors who played with him were forbidden

to use any exertion for fear of marring his effects. How badly he could act was shown in the ‘Iron Chest’ fiasco. His excuse was that he was suffering from illness. ‘Frogs in a marsh, flies in a bottle, wind in a crevice, a preacher in a field, the drone of a bagpipe, all yielded to the imitable soporific monotony of Mr. Kemble,’ wrote George Colman in his famous preface to the play. John Philip would not condescend to act if either his part or his audience displeased him. Macready saw him play Othello in Dublin without one spark of feeling and without one round of applause. In comedy, his pedantry was more offensive than even in his tragedy. A wit remarked of his Don Felix that there was too much of the Don and too little of the Felix. His Charles Surface was called Charles’s Martyrdom, and a gentleman who was about to challenge him for some offence, waived satisfaction on condition that he would promise never to repeat that performance. Lamb, however, was of a different opinion, and speaks highly of him both in this part and all others of artificial comedy. ‘No man,’ he says, ‘could deliver brilliant dialogue half as well.’ His eccentric pronunciation of certain words is well known. Virtue became *vartue*; hideous, *hijus*; bird, *beard*; earth, *airth*; mercy, *maircy*; Rome, *Room*; aches, *aitches*. These peculiarities were made the subject of endless satires. Even in his most convivial hours Kemble was solemn and funereal. Reynolds gives a capital description of his behaviour at one of the Theatrical Fund Dinners. Parsons told a story which set off everyone in a roar, but John remained grave and unmoved. Immediately afterwards, Dodd sang a pathetic ballad, in the midst of which Kemble burst into a fit of laughter, ‘I beg your pardon, gentlemen,’ he said, ‘but I have just taken Parsons’ joke, it is very good.’ After this he was called upon for a song. ‘Gentlemen,’ he said, ‘I will most cheerfully give you the song of “The Gods and Goddesses Hunting the Hare;” but if I produce any humorous effects in it, which I think I shall, you will please

ascribe it to the hints I have received from one of the best comic singers of the day—I beg leave to state I allude to Mrs. Siddons.' Fancy awful Sarah Siddons as a comic singer! She did occasionally favour a select circle with 'Billy Taylor,' and must have been about as comic as the *memento mori* of an Egyptian feast. In society Kemble was perpetually holding forth upon his one all-absorbing topic—himself. At a Royal Academy Dinner he was discussing certain new readings with Scott, who sat next to him, when the great silver chandelier above their heads was seen slowly descending: everybody sprang to their feet except John Philip, who remained immovable, and afterwards rebuked Scott for interrupting his explanations.

STEPHEN KEMBLE became a strolling manager, but made his first appearance in London, at Covent Garden, as Othello, about the same time as John, but created no impression. After his brother's retirement from Drury Lane he played Falstaff there three times, with some success. It would seem that the principal attraction of the performance was his enormous size, which enabled him to play Sir John without stuffing. His son Henry appeared at Drury Lane, in 1819, as Romeo, but took no position. Stephen died in 1822. There were three sisters, all of whom went upon the stage; one, a not very reputable personage, under the pseudonym of 'Anne of Swansea,' won some popularity in her day as a novelist.

Charles, the youngest of the family, was born at Brecknock in 1775. Like his brother John, he was educated at Douai; he afterwards obtained an appointment in the Post Office. But it was not to be expected that a Kemble could be anything but an actor. So Charles threw up his situation, and made his *début* at Sheffield, in 1792, as Orlando. His first appearance in London was in the part of Malcolm in his brother's great revival of Macbeth, in 1794. In 1806 he married Miss De Camp. This lady was born at Vienna, in the year 1774, and had the honour to have the Empress

Marie Thérèse, after whom she was named, for godmother. Her father was a musician, but descended from a good French family. When only six years old she appeared in the ballets at the London Opera House, and at eight she performed with a company of French children in 'La Colombe,' one of Madame de Genlis' juvenile dramas, for the benefit of the starving émigrés. In her young days she was a great favourite with the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert. She was chiefly celebrated for her dancing and for her acting in pantomime parts, such as the Blind Boy, and Theodore in 'Deaf and Dumb.' She is still remembered by an old farce, frequently inflicted upon the public as a *lever de rideau*, 'The Day after the Wedding.' Charles Kemble was the finest Romeo of the present century, the most delightful of Mirabels, Petruchios, Doricourts, Mercutios, and the most admirable of Laertes, Bassanios, and Cassios. Macready well describes him as a first-rate actor in second-rate parts. He was a passable Hamlet; but in the Macbeths and Othellos, which, with the usual perversity of actor-nature he desired to play, he scarcely rose to mediocrity. In the leading characters of tragedy he was cold and stilted, with all the worst faults of his great brother and none of his grandeur; there was, besides, at most times, a languor and tendency to the lachrymose in his style which greatly detracted from its merits. In 1821 his brother John made over to him his share of Covent Garden. The gift was not a happy one, as it nearly proved his ruin. He retired from the stage in 1836; but returned to play at the request of the Princess Victoria. His last appearance was for his daughter's benefit in 1840. Upon the death of Colman, he was appointed examiner of plays. He died in 1854. 'I knew the whole dynasty of the Kembles,' writes Lady Morgan, 'from King John downwards; Charles was the last and best of the whole stock, beautiful, graceful, gallant, and a very fine gentleman; such he was when I first knew him.'

In 1829 his daughter Fanny made her first appearance at

Covent Garden. As the inheritor of a famous name, there was a double interest attached to the event when it became known that, not intended for the stage, she had adopted it to endeavour to save the sinking fortunes of the theatre. Never had these been in so desperate a condition, warrants were out for £896 for parish rates, while the King's tax-gatherer was in possession for £600. A subscription fund was organised, Laporte gave the use of the King's Theatre, and a performance there brought to it £750. But the grand *coup* was made by the lessee's daughter, who was then only in her seventeenth year. She appeared as Juliet ; Abbot was the Romeo ; Mrs. Kemble, after years of retirement, played Lady Capulet, in order to introduce the young *débutante* to the audience ; and her father performed Mercutio, for the first time. The young lady made a great sensation ; the houses were nightly filled to overflowing to her Juliet, Euphrasia, Belvidera, Mrs. Beverly, etc., and at the close of the season her father was enabled to pay off £13,000 of the debt that was crushing him.

---

### CHAPTER III.

GEORGE FREDERICK COOKE.

His first *p penchant* for the stage—Early strolling—A pleasant *tête-d-liche*—Dissipation and misery—His first appearance in London—His Richard and Shylock—Compared with Kemble—His Sir Pertinax Macsycophant—Neglect of study—His ‘Old Complaint’—An expensive display of loyalty—Declining popularity—The first great English actor who visited America—In the States—Gasconading—A bloodless duel—Failing health—Death—Post-mortem—Two grim stories.

Cooke's parentage and place of birth are both doubtful ; he has been claimed as an Irishman and a Scotchman, but, according to his own statement on his death-bed, he was

born in Westminster in 1756, and was afterwards removed to Berwick, where he passed his childhood. He was in the habit of boasting that his father was a captain in the army, but it is more probable that he was a sergeant. At all events, his mother was left a widow, in very straitened circumstances, while he was quite a child. The Edinburgh theatrical company coming to Berwick for a short season decided George Frederick's destiny. He was taken to see '*The Provoked Husband*', and from that time, he says, in a '*Chronicle*' which was found among his papers, plays and playing were never absent from his thoughts. He was then under the protection of two aunts, who apprenticed him to a printer. Cooke's account of his early years is not sufficiently trustworthy to be quoted. He did not long remain in the printer's office, but went to sea, and afterwards spent some time in London, where he saw Macklin and Garrick in several of their finest parts. At twenty we find him making his first bow in a strolling company, acting Dumont, in Rowe's '*Jane Shore*', in the large room of a public-house at Brentford. For two years he strolled about the towns of the south coast, Hastings, Rye, and others; and in 1778 appeared for a benefit at the Haymarket, as Castalio, in Otway's '*Orphan*'. The next year he played several other parts in the same theatre, but without attracting any attention; and he was soon back to the provinces, sometimes playing in barns, sometimes in respectable theatres, like those of Liverpool and Manchester. At length, in 1794, he was engaged for Dublin, and, after eighteen years of probation, appeared for the first time before an audience worthy of those great talents which were now fully developed. But alas! so convivial a city as the Irish capital was a bad home for one of Cooke's habits; and although his success as an actor was great, his dissipation ruined his prospects.

Dunlap, in his life of Cooke, published in 1813, and Mathews, in his '*Memoirs*', relate an anecdote which gives a good idea of his outrageous conduct at this period.

Mathews, then a very young man, was a member of the same company, and lived in the same house with him. One night, having played Mordecai to Cooke's Sir Archy Macsarcasm, in 'Love à la Mode,' much to the tragedian's satisfaction, he was invited to sup and share a jug of whisky-punch in his room. The young novice delightedly accepted the invitation, thinking himself much honoured, and failed not to pour forth those laudations upon his host's talents which were so grateful to George Frederick's ears. One jug of punch was quickly emptied and a second filled, and Cooke began to praise his guest in a patronising way. 'You are young,' he said, 'and want some one to advise and guide you. Take my word for it, there is nothing like industry and sobriety. In our profession dissipation is the bane of youth; villainous company, low company, leads them from study.' Holding forth thus, the jugs of punch continued to disappear with ever-increasing rapidity. Mathews rose to leave, but was pushed back into his seat again. 'You shan't stir; we'll have one more cruiskeen lawn, my dear fellow, and then you shall go to bed,' said the tragedian, now growing very drunk. 'You don't know me. The world don't know me. Many an hour that they suppose I've wasted in drinking, I have devoted to the study of my profession; the passions and all their variations; their nice and imperceptible gradations. You shall see me delineate the passions of the human mind, by facial expression.' The power of the whisky, however, acting in opposition to the will on his strong and flexible features, produced contortions and distortions of which he was insensible. Mathews, a little hazy himself from the potent liquor, half alarmed, and yet with difficulty repressing his laughter at these extraordinary grimaces, sat staring at him, and wishing himself out of the room. After each horrible face Cooke demanded, with an air of intense self-approval, 'Well, sir, and what is that?' 'It's very fine, sir,' answered Mathews, without the remotest conception what he should say. 'Yes, but what is it?'

'Well—a—oh, yes—anger?' 'You're a blockhead!' roared the tragedian; 'the whisky has muddled your brains. It's fear—fear, sir.' Then followed more horrible contortions and more questions, but Mathews never guessed right. 'Now, sir,' said the angry delineator at last, 'I will show you something you cannot possibly mistake.' And he made a hideous face compounded of satanic malignancy, and the leering of a drunken satyr. 'What's that, sir?' 'That? oh, revenge?' 'Dolt, idiot! despite o'erwhelm thee,' burst forth Cooke, furiously: 'it is love?' This was too much, and forgetful of consequences, Mathews fell back in his chair and roared with laughter. 'What, sir! Do you laugh? Am I not George Frederick Cooke? born to command a thousand slaves like thee?' Mathews immediately apologised, averring that the punch had stupefied him. This mollified his host's indignation, and finding the jug empty, he called out for his landlady to refill it. But he had faithfully promised that the previous one should be the last, and Mrs. Burns intended to keep him to his word. 'Sure, Mr. Cooke,' she answered from below, 'I am gone to bed, and you can't have any more to-night.' 'Indeed, but I will,' he replied. Mathews tried to get away, but was again thrust into his chair, while Cooke reiterated his demand for more punch. But Mrs. Burns remained obdurate. Cooke took up the jug and smashed it on the floor over her head. 'Do you hear that, Mrs. Burns?' 'Yes, I do, Mr. Cooke.' Then smash went the chairs, the fire-irons, the table, and between each the question, 'Do you hear that, Mrs. Burns?' 'Indeed, but I do, and you'll be sorry for it to-morrow.' Up went the window, and out, one after another, went the fragments of the broken furniture into the street. Mathews, believing he was in company with a madman, and now thoroughly frightened, endeavoured to make a bolt, but was seized and dragged back. Finding him struggle violently, Cooke rushed to the window and shouted, 'Watch, watch!' A watchman attracted by the uproar was already beneath.

'I give this man in charge,' roared Cooke; 'he has committed murder.' 'What do you mean?' cried the alarmed youth. 'Yes, to my certain knowledge he has this night committed an atrocious, cold-blooded murder. He has most barbarously murdered an inoffensive Jew gentleman named Mordecai; I charge him with it in the name of Macklin, the author of "*Love à la Mode*."' Here Mathews by a desperate effort wrenched himself away and fled, Cooke hurling after him the candle and candlestick.

The disgrace and notoriety of this transaction drove him on to further mad intemperance; he abandoned the stage, and, in a fit of drunkenness and despair, enlisted as a private in a regiment destined for the West Indies; sickness, however, prevented him embarking. In 1796 Maxwell, the manager of the Portsmouth Theatre, being one day in Southampton, was accosted by a soldier, in whom he recognised Cooke. With the aid of the manager of the Manchester Theatre, he purchased his discharge. Some weeks passed, and no more was heard of the truant. One day a boy came to the Portsmouth Theatre to tell Maxwell that a poor sick man who had been a soldier was at his mother's, and wished to see him before he died. He followed the boy to a low public-house, where he found Cooke in a state of the most abject misery. The money sent to procure his discharge, and pay his journey to Manchester, he had spent in drink; then he was taken ill, crawled from Southampton to Portsmouth, and sank exhausted at this tavern. Again the managers came to the rescue, sent him more money and clothes, and had him conveyed to London, where a friend of theirs received him, and undertook his escort into the North. But, stopping upon the road just before he arrived in Manchester, he got so intoxicated that he could not appear before the crowded house that had assembled to greet his return. In 1797 he reappeared at Dublin, and spoke the address on the opening of the new Theatre Royal, in Crow Street. During this engagement he played for the

first time with John Kemble, who was starring. One night while he was waiting at the side scene for his cue to go on, Kemble came up and said : ‘Mr. Cooke, you distressed me exceedingly in my last scene ; I could scarcely get on. You did not give me more than one cue ; you were very imperfect.’ ‘Sir, I was perfect,’ replied Cooke. ‘Excuse me, sir, you were not.’ ‘I was, sir.’ ‘You were not.’ ‘I’ll tell you what ; I’ll not have your faults fathered upon me. And d—— me, Black Jack (Kemble’s nickname), if I don’t make you tremble in your pumps one of these days yet.’

In the year 1800, Cooke, then in the forty-fifth year of his age, was engaged for Covent Garden, for three years, at six, seven, and eight pounds a week ; there he appeared on the 31st of October as Richard the Third. ‘Never,’ he says, ‘was a reception more flattering, nor did ever I receive more encouraging, indulgent, and warm approbation than on that night, both through the play and at the conclusion. Mr. Kemble did me the honour of making one of the audience.’ ‘His superiority over all other Richards,’ says his biographer, Dunlap, ‘in the dissimulation, the crafty hypocrisy, and the bitter sarcasm of the character, is acknowledged by every writer who has criticised his acting. . . . His triumph in this character was so complete, that after a struggle Kemble resigned it altogether to him.’ During the season he played the part twenty-three times. A German writer, quoted by Dunlap, gives the following contrasted picture of Cooke : ‘Cooke does not possess the elegant figure of Kemble ; but his countenance beams with great expression. The most prominent features in the physiognomy of Cooke, are a long and somewhat hooked nose, of uncommon breadth between the eyes, which are fiery, dark, and at times terribly expressive, with prominent lids and flexible brows ; a lofty and broad forehead, and the muscles around the mouth pointedly marked. His countenance is certainly not so dignified as Kemble’s, but its expression of passion, particularly the worst passions of our nature, is stronger. His voice, though

sharp, is powerful, and of great compass, a pre-eminence which he possesses by nature over Kemble, and of which he skilfully avails himself. His attitudes are far less picturesque than those of Kemble, but they are just, appropriate, and natural.'

His second character was Shylock, in which he was equally successful. Strange, that a few years afterwards, Kean, who so strongly resembled him, should have won his first triumphs in the same parts, with only the order reversed. Cooke's third character was Sir Archy Maesarcasm, his fourth Iago, which added another to his list of successes. Macbeth followed, but here he was much inferior to Kemble; yet he played it four nights to crowded houses. Kitely, in which he had seen Garrick, was his next part, and was deemed the most perfect of all he had yet performed. Sir Giles Overreach was another triumph: but in the Stranger, which he performed for his benefit, he could not approach Kemble's pre-eminence. The managers of Covent Garden gave him his benefit free of all expenses, and the receipts were £560.

During this period he seems by an effort of will to have reformed, or at least to have modified his former vicious habits. But at the close of the London season he went 'starring' in the provinces, and returning to his old haunts and his old bad companions, fell back into dissipation and degradation. When on the opening night of his second season he was advertised to appear as Richard, he was playing at Newcastle, with 'a small, undisciplined set,' to use his own words. The house was crowded, and the audience made a great disturbance when Lewis, the acting manager, was compelled to announce to them that Cooke had not arrived. Considerable excitement had been aroused on the occasion by the fact that Kemble, entering the lists with his rival, had announced the same play at Drury Lane. And not until five weeks afterwards did George Frederick make his appearance. How that interim was passed may be sur-

mised. But after some clamour upon his first entrance, and an apologetic speech on his part, in which there was not one word of truth, the audience forgave him and applauded his acting as enthusiastically as ever. Although his conduct had already diminished his attractiveness, Harris, the manager, after giving him a second free benefit, the receipts of which, however, fell to £409, re-engaged him for another three years at £14 a week; a miserable salary, after all, for a man of his abilities. His waning popularity rose again with his representation of Sir Pertinax Macsycophant. ‘You may see all the faults and all the beauties of Cooke in this single character,’ says Leigh Hunt. . . . ‘If Cooke bows it is with a face that says, “What a fool you are to be deceived with this fawning.”’ If he looks friendly, it is with a smile that says, “I will make use of you, and you may go to the devil.” A simple rustic might feel all his affections warmed at his countenance, and exclaim, “What a pure-hearted old gentleman!” but a fine observer would descry under the glowing exterior, nothing but professions without meaning, and a heart without warmth. The sarcasm of Cooke is at all times most bitter, but in this character its acerbity is tempered with no respect either for its object or for himself. His tone is outrageously smooth and deep; and when it finds its softest level, its under monotony is so full of what is called hugging one’s self, and is accompanied with such a dragged smile and viciousness of leer, that he seems as if he had lost his voice through the mere enjoyment of malice. It is in thus acting that in characters of the most apparent labour, as well as in a total neglect of study, this excellent actor surpasses all his contemporaries. His principal faults are confined to his person, for they consist in a monotonous gesture, and a very awkward gait. His shrinking rise of the shoulders, however, may give an idea of that contracted watchfulness with which a mean hypocrite retires into himself. His general air, indeed, his sarcastic cast of countenance, with its close wideness of smile and its hooked nose, and his utter

want of study, joined to the villainous characters he represents, are occasionally sufficient to make some people almost fall out with the actor.' To this criticism Dunlap subjoins the following observations, which add some additional touches to this fine picture of Cooke's style of acting : 'The neglect of study in Mr. Cooke—at least, such study as is necessary to create excellence in other men—is a curious fact in his history ; and one of the most extraordinary traits in the character of this extraordinary man was that ability which he possessed of seizing the perfect image of the person he would represent, and identifying it with his own feelings, so as to express every emotion designed by the author, as if that emotion was his own. And all this as if by intuition, for nobody knew of his studying, except in that hasty and desultory manner which his journal at times indicates. But his perception was uncommonly quick, and his earlier observations on men and their passions must have been uncommonly accurate. . . . Cooke, when he improved his own playing by what he had seen excellent in other players, did not imitate those players, but only seized what he saw natural in them, and made it his own in his own manner.' It was in this neglect of study, with which no genius can dispense, after he rose to eminence, that Cooke was so far inferior to his great successor, Kean, and this rendered his failure in all the subtler parts of tragedy, such as Hamlet, so apparent.

The little restraint that he put upon his inclinations during the first two years of his London engagement soon gave way : one night, in his third season, he came upon the stage in a woful state of intoxication, pleaded indisposition as an apology, tried to play, was hissed, and, unable to proceed, was finally obliged to retire. After this, we find 'too indisposed to act' often entered in his diary of provincial tours. How little, notwithstanding his talents, he was estimated in private life, is evident from the fact that we find no mention in that record of any person of standing seeking his society,

or inviting him to their house : an omission so complete it would be impossible to find in the career of any other distinguished actor, the society of such being always eagerly sought after. Each succeeding season his absence was of more frequent occurrence ; but at his next appearance he was always ready with a plausible address to the outraged public —he had been confined to his bed ‘by a violent disorder’—whatever acts of imprudence he ‘may have’ committed, in *this* instance his conduct was unimpeachable ; and a good-natured audience was ever ready to condone his past offences and applaud his new efforts to amuse. Yet, for all this, such conduct told heavily upon his attractiveness, since the announcement was never any guarantee of his appearance. One night he came on the stage as Sir Archy Macsarcasm, with Johnstone, who was playing Sir Callaghan. There was a dead pause. Then Johnstone, advancing to the footlights, said, with a strong brogue, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Cooke *says* he can’t spake.’ After a shout of laughter at this real Irish bull, the curtain fell amidst a shower of hisses. At another time, after making a few ineffectual attempts to speak the dialogue, Cooke came forward, pressed his hand upon his chest, and, with a most pitiable face, stammered out, ‘Ladies and gentlemen—my old complaint—my old complaint.’ The humour of this *naïve* confession, although not intended as such, was irresistible, but the roar of laughter was quickly succeeded by loud sounds of indignation. In the season of 1803-4 it was arranged that Cooke and Kemble should alternate the first and second parts in some great tragedies. John Philip soon grew tired of the bargain, but Cooke had to keep to it. During this time, however, Kemble played Richmond to Cooke’s Richard, Old Norval to his Glenalvon, Jaffier to his Pierre, Antonio to his Shylock, Othello to his Iago, while Mrs. Siddons sustained the heroines of these plays. Irving describes Cooke’s acting in the jealous scene of ‘Othello.’ He ‘grasped Kemble’s left hand with his own,

and then fixed his right, like a claw, on his shoulder. In this position, drawing himself up to him with his short arm, he breathed his poisonous whispers. Kemble coiled and twisted his hand, writhing to get away, his right hand clasping his brows, and darting his eye back on Iago. It was wonderful.'

In the season of 1807-8, he did not appear until March. He had been passing the interim in Appleby gaol, where his creditors had placed him. For notwithstanding the large sums he had made by his London benefits and provincial engagements, he was overwhelmed with debt. His extravagance and reckless waste were terrible. One night he went into a low public-house in Manchester with the proceeds of his engagement in that town, amounting to nearly four-hundred pounds, in his pocket. Some fellows began abusing the King and the Constitution. Cooke, who was a strong loyalist, entered into a dispute and challenged one of the men to determine the controversy by an appeal to fists. The fellow replied that he took the liberty of abusing him because he was rich, and knew him to be a poor man. 'Do I?' cried Cooke, 'I'll show you that. There—look!' and he pulled a roll of bank-notes out of his pocket and thrust them into the fire. 'There, that's all I have in the world; now I am as poor as you, and now come on!' His opening part, upon his return from *durance vile*, was Sir Pertinax, and the 'Mirror,' noticing the performance says: 'the audience appeared the more "to love him for the dangers he had passed," and with not three but six rounds of applause greeted his return. Such a house had not been seen since "the little hour of little Betty."'

From an entry in his diary, under the date 30th of January, 1809, it would appear his salary had been raised to £20 a week. But he was sinking rapidly in public estimation. The journals depreciated his acting, comparing it unfavourably with that of far inferior players, and made him a butt at which to shoot their frequently dull and coarse

witticisms. During his last season in London (1809-10) his degradation culminated. More than once he came upon the stage only to be led off incapable of speech. The management could not depend on him from one hour to the other. Even when he was comparatively sober a sudden caprice would determine him not to play, and from some place where he was not likely to be found he would send word he should not act that evening. At another time, after he had been given up and another performer, sometimes Kemble himself, was about to take his place, he would suddenly appear at the wing dressed for the character. After each of his escapades there was a humble apology to be made to the audience, until indignation gave way to contempt. The 5th of June, 1810, when he played Falstaff, in the first part of 'Henry IV.', was his last appearance upon the London stage. Thence he went to Liverpool, always one of his strongholds. One night, however, being attacked with his 'old complaint,' the audience angrily demanded an apology. 'Apology from me! from George Frederick Cooke!' he cried. 'Take it from this remark: there's not a brick in your infernal town which is not cemented by the blood of a slave.' Cooper, the American actor, was in the town at the time, and offered him an engagement for America at £25 a week. He was still bound, however, to Harris, the Covent Garden manager. But Cooper, who knew he would be a splendid speculation in New York, was determined to have him, and after much manœuvring contrived to carry him off out of some vile Liverpool slum, while in a state of intoxication, and get him on board a ship bound for America, where he landed in November, 1810.

He was the first great English actor who crossed the Atlantic, and Dunlap, himself an American, says: 'It appeared as impossible that the great London actor should be removed to America, as that St. Paul's Cathedral should have been transported across the ocean. Englishmen in

New York swore roundly it could not be. It was some other performer of the same name—it was even insinuated that the whole thing was an imposition.' Describing his first introduction to him, he continues: 'The neatness of his dress, his sober suit of grey, his powdered grey hairs, and suavity of address, gave no indication of the eccentric being whose weaknesses had been the theme of the English fugitive publications; nor could the strictest examination detect any of those marks by which the votaries of intemperance, falsely called pleasure, are so universally stigmatised.' He goes on to relate that Price, the American manager, on opening the door of the room where he was informed that Cooke awaited him, and seeing a man so different to what he had pictured, retired again, and told the servants he had been directed to the wrong apartment. Cooke appeared on the 21st of November as Richard. The excitement was enormous, the crush was unprecedented, hundreds were unable to gain admission; such a house had never before been seen in America. His reception was splendid. 'His appearance,' continues Dunlap, 'was picturesque and proudly noble; his head elevated, his step firm, his eye beaming fire. I saw no vestige of the venerable, grey-haired old gentleman I had been introduced to at the coffee-house; and the utmost effort of my imagination could not have reconciled the figure I now saw, with that of imbecility and intemperance.' He was sober, played with all his old greatness, and his success was complete. His other celebrated parts followed, and the house, spite of snowstorms, which would on any other occasion, says his biographer, have rendered the theatre a void, was nightly crammed. In seventeen nights there were taken 21,578 dollars. But alas, he quickly fell into his old vices. The night of his benefit he appeared as Cato, intoxicated, and without having once refreshed his memory by reading the part; he uttered a string of incoherences, but scarcely one word of Addison's. This escapade was followed by others,

and the old life of riot and excess recommenced ; and there was the old story of disappointed audiences, of disappearances for days together, until he was found penniless in some squalid den in the vilest purlieus of the city.

The second city of the States he visited was Boston, where he was also enthusiastically received. Thence he returned to New York, but his evil habits, his wild extravagancies, and, above all, his insolence to the people, had even during his brief first visit destroyed his popularity. He had a hatred for republican institutions, and never lost an opportunity of displaying it. A gentleman mentioning that his family were amongst the first settlers in Maryland, Cooke demanded if he had kept the family jewels : ‘I mean *the chains and handcuffs*,’ he added. Hearing the President was coming to see him act, he exclaimed, ‘What ! I, George Frederick Cooke, who have played before the Majesty of Britain, play before your Yankee president ! I’ll not play before him. It is degradation enough to play before rebels, but I’ll not go on for the amusement of the king of rebels, the contemptible king of the Yankee-doodles.’ He asserted that when a youth he had been in the army during the American rebellion. Upon the heights of Brooklyn being pointed out to him, he exclaimed : ‘That’s the spot we marched up ; the rebels retreated, we charged ; they fled : we mounted the hill. I carried the colours of the 5th ; my father carried them before me ; my son now carries them. I led—Washington was in the rear of the rebels. I pressed forward, when at this moment Howe cried “Halt !” But for that, sir, I should have carried Washington, and there would have been an end of the rebellion.’ One night he was lamenting over his cups that he had no children, but shortly afterwards filled up a bumper and proposed the health of his eldest son, a captain in the 5th. ‘What is his name?’ inquired one of his companions. ‘What is my name, sir ? George Frederick Cooke.’ A little time afterwards he proposed the health of his second son. ‘And

what is his name?' was again the query. 'What should it be, sir, but George Frederick Cooke?' That same night, being very intoxicated, he was put into his coach by his host, who bore him company; and all the way along he abused the country. The coachman driving a little recklessly, the gentleman put his head out of window and cautioned him. 'What, sir,' cried Cooke, 'do you pretend to direct my servant? Get out of my coach. Stop, coachman.' 'Drive on,' commanded his companion. 'Do you dare order my coachman? Get out, or this fist shall——' 'Sit still, sir, or I'll blow your brains out!' was the quiet reply. For a moment Cooke sat still, petrified with astonishment; then began: 'Has George Frederick Cooke come to this infernal country to be treated thus? Shall it be told in England? Well, sir, if you will not get out, I will.' And out he got and sat down on the roadside. He threatened that on his return to England he would publish such a satirical picture of the country and its inhabitants as had never been seen of any other part of the world. 'The Yankee-doodles' were certainly a milder race then than they were in the days of Kean and Macready, or George Frederick's career would have been speedily cut short by bullet or bowie-knife. But, as the last anecdote indicates, rash valour was not among his failings. Indeed, he was always ready to retreat before the consequences of his insolence. One day, in company with some others, he had a hot dispute with a bullying fellow, and assailed him with the most abusive language. The fellow showed fight; Cooke cooled down. Then one of his companions took up the quarrel, and ejected his opponent. There was a row and a scuffle on the stairs. Cooke retired to his bedroom and called his servant. 'Sam, it's very late; help me off with my clothes; I'll go to bed.' Just then one of the party from below came running up, and finding the tragedian already half undressed, exclaimed, 'Why, Mr. Cooke! why are you here, while Price is fighting that rascal for you?' 'Where is

the scoundrel?' cried Cooke, fiercely. 'Sam, why are you so slow? Give me my boots. Where is the scoundrel? My coat, Sam. Where is the blackguard?' But the serum image was over long before Cooke was ready to take part in it. One of his American friends generously entered into the humour of his Pistol-like bravery, and challenged him. 'You must apologise or fight,' he said, after the actor had been as usual railing against the country. 'I will not apologise, young gentleman,' he answered loftily: 'I will fight you. But if I fight you I shall shoot you. I am the best shot in Europe. If *you insist* upon it I will shoot you. I would not willingly shed blood.' The pistols, loaded only with powder, were discharged; his antagonist, pretending to be shot, fell; and Cooke, cutting the sleeve of his coat, made believe he was wounded in the shoulder.

Upon his return to Boston, such was the rage for seeing Cooke, that though it was the depth of winter and excessively cold, the box office was surrounded from three o'clock in the morning until the hour of opening, which was ten. From the time of his landing in America his health began to fail, and on several occasions he was incapacitated from appearing through real indisposition. A constitution of iron alone could have withstood such years of debauchery, but it gave way at last. On the 31st of July, 1812, while playing Sir Giles Overreach at Boston, he was mortally seized, but lingered till the following September, when he died. He was preparing at the time to return to England, Harris having written to him to come back to Covent Garden. 'John Bull,' said the letter, 'is as fond of you as ever, and would be most happy to see his favourite again.' We could have no better proof of Cooke's great abilities than such an offer after all his disgraceful behaviour.

Even after the grave had closed over him, George Frederick, at least in body, had not ended his eccentric career. I will conclude this chapter with two extraordinary anecdotes of the post-mortem period.

Kean was an enthusiastic admirer of Cooke, and when he was in New York visited his grave. Finding it in the 'stranger vault,' without a memorial stone, he had the body removed to another spot, and a handsome monument placed over it. In the transition from one grave to another he possessed himself of one of the toe-bones, and this he brought back to London with him as a precious relic. Upon his arrival in England, Elliston and several of the Drury Lane company went as far as Barnet to meet him. When he arrived at the hotel where they were to breakfast, he stopped all their greetings with, 'Before you say a word, Behold ! Fall down and kiss this relic ! This is the toe-bone of the greatest creature that ever walked the earth—of George Frederick Cooke. Come, down with you all and kiss the bone !' Elliston, to humour him, dropped upon his knees and kissed the relic, and the others followed his example. Upon arriving home Kean's first words to his wife were, 'I have brought Charles a fortune. I have something that the directors of the British Museum would give ten thousand pounds for ; but they shan't have it. Here it is, the toe-bone of the greatest man that ever lived—George Frederick Cooke. Now, observe ; I put this on the mantel-piece ; but let no one dare to touch it. You may all look at it—at a distance, but be sure no one presumes to handle it.' There it lay for months, an object of pride to the possessor, who never failed to point it out to his visitors. But Mrs. Kean, far from sharing her husband's satisfaction, held the relic in disgust. One day, resolved no longer to endure its sight, she caught hold of it with a piece of paper and threw it over the wall into the next garden. That night Kean returned home very inebriated. He missed the bone. He stormed, raved, summoned the servants out of their beds, and searched every likely and unlikely spot. At last the conviction was forced upon him that it was gone. Sinking into a chair he exclaimed, with drunken lachrymoseness, 'Mary, your son has lost a fortune. He was worth £10,000 ; now he is a beggar !'

One night ‘Hamlet’ was to be performed at the Park Theatre, in New York; at the last moment the property man found he had not a skull, and hastened to the house of Dr. Francis to borrow one. That lent was Cooke’s. It was returned that night; but the next evening at a meeting of the Cooper Club, a desire was expressed to examine the head of the great tragedian, which was again produced, for the investigation of Daniel Webster, Henry Wheaton, and other celebrities.

The first anecdote is related upon the authority of Mr. Proctor, in his ‘Life of Kean.’ The second upon that of Dr. Francis, in his ‘Old New York.’ The doctor, however, has not informed us by what means he became possessed of the skull.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### SOME OTHER FAMOUS ACTORS OF THIS PERIOD.

Master Betty—His first appearance at Dublin—Appears at Drury Lane—Extraordinary sensation—The Betty mania—Caricatures—Enormous receipts—Macready’s estimate of his abilities—Quick—Jack Bannister—Provincial criticism—Dr. Syntax—Lewis—The original of Jeremy Diddler—Edwin ‘Gags’—‘Peeping Tom’—Dickey Suet—His death—Holman—Wroughton—Anecdote of Jack Johnstone.

PROBABLY the most extraordinary dramatic success on record was that of the boy actor, Henry West Betty. He was born, though of Irish descent, at Shrewsbury, in 1791. His father, it would appear, was a man of some means; his mother had a taste for reading and recitation, which she imparted to her son, whose dramatic capabilities she discovered and cultivated with an eye to business. As the parents told the story, his passion for the stage began with seeing Mrs. Siddons play Elvira in ‘Pizarro,’ at the Belfast Theatre, when he was about eleven years old. His parents were ready enough to indulge his passion, and at once placed him under Houghton, the prompter of the theatre, for instruction. The boy was

bright and intelligent, and proved an apt pupil. On the 11th of August, 1803, he made his *début* on the Belfast stage, as Osman in Voltaire's 'Zaire,' and was highly successful. He afterwards appeared as Douglas, Rolla, Romeo, and Hamlet, at Cork, Waterford, Limerick, and Dublin. These were the days of the 'United Irishmen,' and the streets of Dublin had to be cleared by a certain hour at night; but the authorities extended the time in honour of 'the Young Roseius,' as the Milesians dubbed him, and notices were printed in the bills that people leaving the theatre during his engagement would not be stopped until after eleven o'clock. From Ireland he proceeded to Scotland, where he created a great *furore*. Jackson, the Edinburgh manager, published the following fulsome notice of his acting: 'It is one of those singularities of Nature that neither history nor tradition can furnish, but which is now beheld by us; but can never be seen again till the AUTHOR of all things shall, when he thinks meet, condescend to endue another stripling in *embryo* with a similar incredible combination of stage endowments, for the gratification of contemporary admiration.' Home, the author of 'Douglas,' then seventy years of age, sat at the wings to see him play young Norval. 'This is the first time,' he said, 'I ever saw the part of Douglas played, that is, according to my idea of the character as at the time I conceived and wrote it.' Whether he really believed that this boy played the part better than did Spranger Barry and all the other great actors who had essayed it, or whether his vanity coloured his judgment, it would be difficult to say. At Glasgow, a critic who dared to find fault with the idol's performance raised such a storm about his head that he was obliged to leave the city.

Very soon the patentees of Drury Lane offered him an engagement at the National Theatre—the terms, half the receipts of his benefit. But he was advised to refuse anything under £50 a night. The advice was taken and the negotiations were suspended; upon which the Covent Garden

manager stepped in and closed at the required sum. Pending his opening in London, which was arranged for the December of that year (1804), he visited other English towns, creating an ever-increasing mania wherever he went. At Liverpool, crowds, eager to secure places for the night, would assemble round the box-office at an early hour in the morning, and when it was opened the crush was so fierce that gentlemen were bruised and half suffocated, had their clothes torn to ribbons, their hats and even their shoes carried away. For his fourteen performances here he cleared, with benefit, £1,520.

But it was reserved for London to crown the madness. At one o'clock in the afternoon, on the 1st of December, 1804, a prodigious concourse filled Bow Street and the piazza of Covent Garden Theatre; towards evening the numbers and the pressure became so alarming, that it was thought necessary to send for a guard of soldiers to clear the entrance and form passages and approaches; but for this precaution, a terrible catastrophe must have occurred. A few minutes after the doors were opened the house was crammed. Gentlemen, knowing every seat in the boxes was taken, yet forced their way through and sprang over into the pit to steal a march upon the pittites, others, less scrupulous, took forcible possession of box-seats previously engaged, and could not be dislodged; every lobby and passage was filled with people content to pay any price, if they could only peep at the stage through a hole or a crevice; fainting women, and even men, had to be drawn out of the mass, and gentlemen wedged into suffocating corners were kept from swooning only by their wives constantly fanning them. Drury Lane, with a very weak bill, took over £300 from the overflow of its neighbour. The play was 'Barbarossa,' an English version of Voltaire's 'Mérope.' The first act, in which the star did not appear, was performed in dumb show, so great was the uproar. But when at length Barbarossa gave the order for Achmet to be brought before him, it was as though

an enchanter's wand had been suddenly waved over the clamorous concourse, turning it to stone ; there was a death-like silence, not a movement, not a whisper was heard, the very breath was held in intensity of expectation. As he stepped from the wing, attired in the close-fitting dress of a slave, which made his small figure appear even smaller upon that great stage, the spell was lifted, and there burst forth a roar of applause. The boy, although remarkable for modest and unassuming manners, had a marvellous self-possession, and was by no means flurried by this great reception. Mrs. Inchbald, who was present, complained that 'his preaching-like tones' fatigued her, but she acknowledged that in the latter acts he exhibited great fire, spirit and impassioned variety. 'He is a clever little boy,' she adds, 'and had I never seen boys act before, I might have thought him exquisite.' The green room, however, caught the infection from the audience, and hailed him a prodigy, a transcendent genius, a second and greater Garrick ! 'Nature has endowed him with genius we shall vainly attempt to find in any one of the actors of the present day,' wrote one of his critics.

That the boy was remarkably clever there can be as little doubt as that his talents were in no degree commensurate with the sensation he created ; his carriage and action were beautifully graceful, his capacity for study and his memory prodigious. As an instance, he is said to have studied Hamlet in less than four days ; but although his voice was powerful and had a fine depth of tone, it was monotonous, his delivery frequently too rapid for distinctness, and sometimes noisy to ranting ; besides which it was disfigured by strong provincialisms and an absence of the letter *h*, the result of imperfect education. But above all he had no originality of conception. Houghton, the Belfast prompter, taught him all, at least all his early and most successful parts. In the books out of which he studied, every inflection of the voice was marked, every movement of the arms, and even of the legs. He owed everything to his instructor, and he

was not ungrateful : one of the first uses he made of his good fortune being to settle an annuity upon him. His unprecedented success was partly the result of one of those mental epidemics which have at times infected the public mind in all ages and all countries, and partly of that love for the abnormal, which has always been an English characteristic. ‘Any strange being there makes a man,’ says Caliban. We may take some heart at our own theatrical shortcomings when we read that John Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, George Frederick Cooke, Mrs. Jordan, and Jack Bannister played to empty benches while Master Betty was drawing the whole town, and that Charles Young, Charles Kemble, and all the great actors, except the Kemble and his great sister, had to play seconds to this ‘puny whipster.’

The Betty mania was now at its height. Macready, in his ‘Reminiscences,’ relates an anecdote how, when the boy stopped for the night at an hotel in Dunchurch, a lady of one of the leading county families entreated the landlord to get her a sight of the young Roscius. Boniface suggested there was only one way of gratifying her wish : he and his parents were just about to dine, and she could carry in one of the dishes as though she were a servant. The lady was eagerly grateful, and made one of the waiters at table throughout the meal ! In London, titled ladies contended for the honour of having him to sit beside them in their carriages, and raved about ‘the divine Master Betty.’ Opie painted him as Young Norval, Northcote in Vandyke costume leaving the tomb of Shakespeare, intimating that he had stolen thence the Promethean fire of genius. ‘Gentleman’ Smith, now an old man, came all the way from Bury St. Edmunds to see him act, and after the performance presented him with a seal bearing Garrick’s likeness. ‘Mr. Garrick,’ he said, ‘bade me during his last illness keep this until I should meet a player who acted from Nature and feeling ; such I have found in you.’ When overwork brought upon him a short illness, bulletins were issued at intervals

during the day, and were waited for as eagerly as though he had been some great personage upon whom the fate of the kingdom depended. Charles James Fox read Zanga to him, and William Pitt once made a motion of adjournment in the Commons, in order that he and the other members might be able to see him act some particular part: while the University of Cambridge, not to be outdone in the general enthusiasm, made him the subject of a prize-medal, the theme being '*Quid noster Roscius egit?*'

Cumberland says, 'How delicious to be caressed by Dukes, and what is better, by Dukes' daughters, flattered by wits, feasted by aldermen, and stuck up in the windows of print-shops—what encouragement does this great enlightened nation hold up to merit! I declare I saw with surprise a man who led about a bear lose all his popularity in the street where this exquisite young gentleman had his lodgings, the people ran to see him at the window, and left bear and bear-leader in solitude. I saw this exquisite young gentleman wafted to his morning's rehearsal in a vehicle that to my vulgar optics seemed to bear upon its polished doors a ducal crown. I looked to see if John Kemble were on the braces, or Cooke perchance behind the coach. I saw the lackeys at their post, but Glenalvon was not there.'

Besides pictures of his person of all degrees of likeness and unlikeness, numbers of caricatures adorned the print-sellers' windows. One represented him striding from roof to roof of the two great theatres, for he was now playing at both, as we shall shortly see, and Kemble and Sheridan looking up ruefully at the new Colossus. Another pictured him and Kemble mounted on the same horse, Kemble behind, and these words coming out of young Betty's mouth: 'I don't mean to affront you, but when two persons ride on a horse one must ride behind!'

His engagement at Covent Garden was to play three nights weekly; so Drury Lane made an arrangement with him for the off-nights. For the first three performances he

received £50; for the remainder (twenty-five) £100, besides four benefits, each of which was, with presents, worth £1,000. The gross receipts for the twenty-eight nights were £17,210 11s; the nightly average being £614 13s. 3d. The largest amount taken in one night, £752, was to 'Douglas'; on three occasions the takings exceeded £700. After making another tour of the provinces, he returned the following autumn to Drury Lane; but the spell was dissolved, the mania subsiding; a clique of the more judicious playgoers organised a determined opposition to popular folly. The average receipts fell to £341 a night, or little more than half of those of a few months back; his benefit was only £301, being a lower sum than was realised by those of Mrs. Jordan, Miss Duncan, Braham and Bannister, all of which took place about the same time. More than once the management appears to have purposely set him in a ludicrous position, as, for instance, when in 'Gustavus Vasa,' they placed him between the two tallest and stoutest men in the company, and gave him Mrs. St. Leger, a woman of enormous proportions, for mother. His power of attraction diminished nightly, and the days of his greatness, at least in London, were over. They had been brief, brilliant, and profitable. But although the metropolis had had enough of 'the Young Roscius,' the provincials still flocked to see him as eagerly as ever. At fifteen, however, he entered himself as a student at Cambridge, for the Church. But the spell of Thalia and Melpomene is not so easily broken, and upon the completion of his education he returned once more to the arena of his boyish triumphs. Maturity had not ripened his talents, and he met with only indifferent success.

Writing of this time, Macready considered that his talents were scarcely appreciated, that the public resented upon the man the blind idolatry they had lavished upon the boy. There was a sort of sing-song in his delivery, he says, that suggested words learned by heart rather than flowing from

impulse ; ‘but, when warmed into passion, he became possessed with the spirit of the scene, and in witnessing, as I have done, his illustration of passages with all the originality and fire of genius, the conviction was pressed upon me that if he had not had to his prejudice the comparison of his boyish triumphs, and the faulty manner derived from frequent careless repetition, he would have maintained a distinguished position in his maturer years.’ He retired from the stage in 1824, but survived until August 24th, 1874.

From the tragedians turn we now to the comedians.

QUICK, who made his first appearance at the Haymarket, in 1767, as one of the pupils in Foote’s ‘Orators,’ was George III.’s favourite actor, and the King so loved his conversation that he would frequently send for him to Buckingham Palace. He realised a comfortable fortune, and resigned his engagement at Drury Lane in 1799—because he was called upon to act more than three times a week ! He returned to the stage, however, in 1801, to play Isaac in the revival of Sheridan’s ‘Duenna,’ and again in 1809 for the same part at the Lyceum. His last appearance was in 1813, as Don Pedro in ‘The Wonder ;’ but he did not die until 1831, being then eighty-three years old. He once played Richard the Third for his benefit. Taylor says, ‘He supported the part with good sense and judgment throughout, but the peculiarity of his voice occasionally broke forth with such comic effect, that the audience, with all their respect for his talents and character, could not help giving way to ludicrous emotions.’ ‘In all Shakespeare’s clowns,’ says Boaden, ‘he freely executed the conceptions of his great author, and said no more than was set down for him. His Dogberry may be said to have been as perfect a personation as any representation even by Garrick himself.’ He was a famous Tony Lumpkin and Justice Woodcock (‘Love in a Village’), and particularly excellent in misers.

There is scarcely any other of our old actors who is men-

tioned so lovingly as ‘Jack’ BANNISTER; ‘Delightful Bannister!’ Leigh Hunt calls him. ‘Jack Bannister and he (Suet,)’ writes Elia, ‘had the fortune to be more of personal favourites with the town than any actors before or after. . . . Jack was more *beloved* for his sweet, good-natured moral pretensions. Dicky was more *liked* for his sweet, good-natured no pretensions at all. Your whole conscience stirred with Bannister’s performance of Walter, in ‘The Children in the Wood.’ This was his great part, peculiarly adapted as it was to display that combination of tragedy and comedy which was his chief excellence. Walpole says it was one of the most admirable performances he ever saw, that his transports of joy and despair were incomparable, and his various countenances would be adapted to the pencil of Salvator Rosa. ‘He made me shed as many tears as I suppose the old original ballad did when I was six years old.’

During his lesseeship at Manchester, Elliston, Bannister being in the city, conceived the joke of putting him in the bills for a small part in a comedy, under an assumed name, and announcing that between the play and the farce the gentleman would attempt a scene from ‘The Children in the Wood,’ after the manner of the celebrated Mr. John Bannister. On this evening he acted it in his best manner. But scarcely had he uttered three words when the audience began to hiss, and very soon there rose cries of ‘Off, off!’ and the hissing and clamour rose to such a height that he was obliged to retire. On the Saturday, one of the newspapers declared it was the vilest attempt at imitation that had ever been offered to the public! Bannister was the most admirable sailor ever seen; not the transpontine trouser-hitching, tobacco-chewing monster who talks as no human being ever talked, but the real ‘salt.’ ‘Mr. Bannister,’ says Leigh Hunt, ‘is the first low comedian on the stage. Let an author present him with a humorous idea, whether it be of jollity, of ludicrous distress, or of grave indifference, whether

it be mock heroic, burlesque, or mimicry, and he embodies it with an instantaneous felicity.'

His father, Charles Bannister, was a good actor and singer under Foote's management. John was born in 1760. He was intended for an artist, and was a student at the Royal Academy ; but he preferred the stage, and appeared at the Haymarket as Dick, in 'The Apprentice,' for his father's benefit in 1778. Tragedy, however, was his ambition, and Garrick trained him with great care in the part of Zaphna, in 'Mahomet.' But Jack soon discovered that comedy was his destiny. To his other talents was added an admirable one for mimicry. In 1807, he went through the country with a Mathews' kind of entertainment called 'Bannister's Budget,' consisting of imitations and characters. He always kept up his association with artists, and was himself a clever caricaturist. It was he who suggested the idea of Dr. Syntax to Rowlandson. He had a flexibility of feature, an eye and a power of facial expression only surpassed by Garrick. He was as delightful off the stage as on, and had such wit, geniality, and good-nature that it would have been impossible to have been dull in his presence. He quitted the stage in 1815 ; but he lived twenty years after his retirement in the enjoyment of his ample means, dying in 1835. He lies buried with his father in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

LEWIS, the airiest and most mercurial of comedians, the most restless of human beings, 'the sprightly, the gay, the exhilarating, the genteel,' was Harry Woodward's successor. During his youth he played both in tragedy and comedy, but afterwards entirely confined himself to the latter. His great charm was his animal spirits ; he was the original personator of nearly all Reynolds' and O'Keefe's rattling, hare-brained, and impossibly-lively heroes, and of Kenney's still famous Jeremy Diddler. Like Paul Pry, that most amusing of impudent adventurers was drawn from life. The original was a gentleman who had obtained the nickname of 'Half-

crown Bibb.' He never met an acquaintance without asking a loan, in the very words of his great stage-double : 'Have you got such a thing as ninepence about you?' Meeting Morton, the dramatic author, in the street one day, he requested the loan of five shillings. 'I have only three-and-sixpence in change,' replied the victim, handing it to him. 'By-the-bye,' said Bibb, at parting, 'don't forget you owe me eighteenpence ; you know, I intended to borrow a crown of you.' His father made him a weekly allowance of a pound, but he borrowed of every relation, as well as of every acquaintance ; and if they refused him, he would sit down upon their door-steps with such an air of intense dejection that he was sure to gather a crowd round him, until the persecuted householder was obliged to send out the solicited coins to rid himself of the nuisance. Strange to relate, 'Half-crown Bibb' died on the same night the farce was brought out. Lewis made his first appearance as an actor at Dublin in 1770, and in 1773 came to Covent Garden, at which house he was acting-manager during twenty-one years. He was originally a man of property ; and purchased a sixth share of the Covent Garden patent, which, as we have seen, he afterwards disposed of to Kemble. He retired in 1809, and died in 1813.

EDWIN may be regarded as Weston's successor in that peculiar style of comedy, or rather farce-acting, which passed from him to Liston, and ended with Wright. His first appearance was at Dublin, in 1765 ; thence to Bath, in 1768. In 1776 he was engaged at the Haymarket, where for three years he played during the summer months, and returned to the Western city for the winter. He opened at Covent Garden in 1779, after which he alternated between that house and the Haymarket. Many performers before and since the days of Edwin have acquired the power, by private winks, irrelevant buffoonery, and dialogue, to make their fellow-players laugh, and thus confound the audience and mar the scene. But Edwin, disdaining this confined

and distracting system, established a kind of *entre-nous-ship* with the public, and made them his confidants ; and, though wrong in his principle, yet so neatly and skilfully did he execute it, that instead of injuring the business of the stage, he frequently enriched it. He was the original Lingo, and of nearly all O'Keefe's farce parts. Never were author and actor so indebted to each other. His humour was wholly spontaneous ; he could not transform himself into a character ; he was always irresistibly comic, but he was always Edwin. He was a terrible ‘gagger,’ and took such liberties with the audience as would not be countenanced in any save the lowest theatres nowadays. Frederick Reynolds relates, how he was in the boxes one night witnessing his performance in ‘The Son-in-Law.’ In one of the scenes he has to propose to an old gentleman for his daughter’s hand. ‘But you are so ugly,’ objects the father. Upon which Edwin advanced to the footlights, and, appealing to the audience said : ‘I submit to the decision of an enlightened British public which is the ugliest of us three—I, Cranky (the old man), or that gentleman in the front row of the balcony-box?’ (pointing to Reynolds). Boaden gives a fine description of his acting in one of his famous parts. ‘Peeping Tom had one scene more masterly than anything I have seen in farce : I mean that of poor Tom’s abstraction while, in his mind’s eye, he sees the whole procession of Lady Godiva pass before him. This was a thing of pure fancy, and infinitely productive. You would have sworn to the succeeding images of the procession—the distant view of the equitation of Lady Godiva—her approach—her “unadorned charms” at last brought fully before his eyes, the burst of commentary, “Talk of a coronation !” all together produced a revelry of enjoyment that used to convulse the spectators, and it is a precious recollection of the power of a true comedian.’ Sir Hugh Evans was another masterpiece of acting. ‘This singular being,’ says Boaden, ‘was the absolute victim of sottish intemperance. I have

seen him brought to the stage-door at the bottom of a chaise senseless and motionless ; if the clothes could be put upon him, and he was pushed on to the lamps, he rubbed his stupid eyes for a minute, consciousness and brilliant humour awakened together, and his acting seemed only the richer for the bestial indulgence that had overwhelmed him.' He died in 1790. On the day of his funeral the lid of the coffin was raised, and on the dead actor's face was seen the same peculiar serio-comic smile that was always wont 'to set the table in a roar.'

SUETT, when a boy, was a chorister at St. Paul's. He made his first appearance at Drury Lane in 1780, and was considered to be Parsons' successor ; but he was not so legitimate an actor as his predecessor, being much given to gag and grimace. Yet he was exquisitely droll. 'He was the Robin Goodfellow of the stage,' writes Elia, 'he came in to trouble all things with a welcome perplexity ; himself no whit troubled in the matter. He was known, like Puck, by his note—ha ! ha ! ha !—sometimes deepening to ho ! ho ! ho ! . . . . Thousands of hearts yet respond to the chuckling "O la" of Dicky Suett, brought back to their remembrance by the faithful transcript of his friend Mathews' mimicry. The force of nature could no further go. He drolled upon the stock of these two syllables richer than the cuckoo. . . . Shakespeare foresaw him when he framed his fools and jesters. They have all the true Suett stamp, a loose and shambling gait, a slippery tongue.' Yet this creature, so merry upon the stage, was a martyr to a horrible nervousness. Once when he and Boaden were talking together, he gave the latter 'a most curious and unaffected detail of the horrors that pursued him nightly whenever sleep surprised him. I solemnly declare that no powers, of even German invention, have yet given a series of images so terrific, nor displayed so graphically, as was the record of misery endured by Suett.' Alas, the bottle, the curse of so many of our old actors, was at the root of it all. To again quote the inimit-

able Elia, ‘When death came himself, not in metaphor, to fetch Dicky, it is recorded of him by Robert Palmer, who kindly watched his exit, that he received the last stroke, neither varying his accustomed tranquillity nor tune, with the simple exclamation worthy to have been recorded in his epitaph, “O la ! O la ! Bobby.”’ He died in 1805, and was buried in the churchyard of St. Paul’s Cathedral.

Many names, both of tragedians and comedians, who had some fame in their day, might be added to the annals of this period. There was the handsome Holman, a tragedian of the Kemble school, who, for his fine face and figure, rather than his commanding talents, held a prominent position upon the London stage from 1784 to 1811. Wroughton, an excellent actor of character parts, flourished between 1768 and 1809.

A famous player of Irish character was Jack Johnstone, who, in private life, was very much of the gay, rattling, unscrupulous Hibernian gentleman, as which he delighted a London audience for thirty-six years (from 1784 to 1820). In his younger days he was more essentially a singer than an actor. One night, at the Theatre Royal, Dublin, he was performing Balthazar, in ‘Much Ado About Nothing,’ in which he sang, ‘Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more.’ When he came to the refrain, ‘Hey nonny, nonny,’ at the end of the first verse, a voice from the front row of the gallery took up the music and chanted ‘Jacky Johnstone, Jacky Johnstone, oh you owe me, you owe me, you owe me ten and a penny.

It was the keeper of a tennis court to whom Jack had long been indebted that sum, and who took this opportunity, although more in a spirit of fun than of malice, to publish his claim.

## CHAPTER V.

## TWO ROYAL FAVOURITES : 'PERDITA' ROBINSON AND MRS. JORDAN.

Mary Darby's early history—Her inclination for the stage—An unwilling bride—The Robinson family—Great expectations—The belle of the day—Temptation—A house of cards Poverty and a prison—An actress at last—A brilliant success—An eventful night—Florizel to Perdita—A romantic meeting Farewell to the stage—A Prince's love—Forsaken—A bitter end—Mrs. Jordan—Her early struggles—First introduction to Tate Wilkinson Dawning fame—Rivals—Last appearance at York—London *début*—Imitators and originals—As Viola—The secret of her success The Duke of Clarence—Lady Teazle—Widow Cheerly—A cruel blow—A settler—Terms of separation—A mystery Last scene of all—A supernatural story—Three Peccresses : Miss Farren, Miss Brunton, Miss Mellon—Mrs. Powell—Mrs. Mattocks—Mrs. Esten.

IN all stage annals, there is no sadder romance than the one I am about to relate. The whole story, as narrated by Mrs. Robinson herself, is so like a novel of the last century, that we can scarcely believe but that it is the adventures of some persecuted but fictitious heroine we are perusing. There is little doubt, however, but that the record is, in the main, true—that she was far more sinned against than sinning. Even so rigid a moralist as Hannah More could not condemn her. Cynical Horace Walpole, who was not very pitiful to human frailty, could say, 'I make the greatest allowance for inexperience and novel passions ;' and strait-laced Sarah Siddons exclaimed, 'Poor Perdita ! I pity her from my very heart !' MARY DARBY was born in November, 1758, in an old house adjoining the Bristol Cathedral. She describes herself as being, when a child, swarthy, with very large eyes, and melancholy features, and that the early propensities of her life were romantic and singular. Being an only daughter, she seems to have been petted and spoiled. 'My clothes,' she says, 'were sent for from London : my

fancy was indulged to the extent of its caprices ; I was flattered and praised into a belief that I was a being of a superior order. To sing, to play a lesson on the harpsichord, to recite an elegy, and to make doggerel verses, made the extent of my occupations.' Her father was a merchant ; a speculation took him to Labrador, where he lost all his money, and formed a female connection which kept him away from home. Mrs. Darby removed to London, and was compelled to open a small school at Chelsea to eke out a subsistence ; but our ex-merchant returning unexpectedly, was so indignant at what he styled this degradation of his name, that he compelled her to break it up, although it would seem he contributed but little to the family support.

During this time Mary had been growing a remarkably beautiful girl. She was only fourteen years of age, and yet so precociously developed as to be taken for seventeen or eighteen. In all her parents' vicissitudes, due care seems to have been bestowed upon her education, and she was as clever and accomplished in mind as she was charming in person. By-and-by the father disappeared again ; his parting words to his wife were highly characteristic—'Take care that no dishonour falls upon my daughter ; if she is not safe on my return I will annihilate you !' These words greatly influenced the girl's future destiny. Her dancing-master hearing her recite one day, was so struck by her talent that he persuaded her to take to the stage, and procured her an introduction to Garrick, who was then about to retire. She passed an evening at his house, and he was so pleased with her recitation that he arranged she should appear as Cordelia to his '*Lear*,' no other part being suitable to her extreme youth.

But her *début* was not to take place yet awhile. A young gentleman, who lived in the opposite house to that in which she lodged, fell in love with her and made his passion known at the window by dumb show until he procured an introduction, discovered the mother's pious weaknesses, and

sent her Hervey's 'Meditations.' So charmed was the lady with this good young man, that although Mary had not long entered into her sixteenth year, she gave a willing ear to his proposal for an immediate union. Not so Mary, however, who by no means reciprocated his passion. Mr. Robinson—such was the gentleman's name—was articled to the law, and represented himself as the heir-expectant of a rich uncle. From a mother's point of view it was a good match, and it would overthrow the theatrical arrangements, of which Mrs. Darby was very doubtful. The dreadful threat of her husband was likewise preying upon her mind, and she was probably anxious to shift upon another the responsibility of a precociously developed and very beautiful girl, who attracted a great deal of attention, and was vain and sentimental into the bargain. So Mary was married—rather against her will, for the event destroyed all those delicious illusions of stage triumphs upon which she had set her heart. Her only motive in uniting herself to Mr. Robinson was, she says, to remain near her mother, whom, to clinch the matter, he had artfully arranged should live with them. 'My heart, even when I knelt at the altar, was as free from any tender impression as it had been at the moment of my birth.' During the first week after the honeymoon, she told her mother, 'with a torrent of tears,' that she was the most wretched of mortals. Not a favourable augury for the future life of a bride not sixteen.

Mr. Robinson desires their union to be kept secret for family reasons; but his constant evasions exciting Mrs. Darby's suspicions, she insists upon her daughter being introduced to his relatives, and they take a journey into Wales for this purpose. Mr. Robinson is in fact the illegitimate son of a Welsh squire, who passes for his uncle. He has a sister who, although only twenty years of age, is stiff and antiquated, and receives the young wife with the utmost frigidity, and there is an old housekeeper of overbearing and vindictive spirit. Mary's time passes heavily enough in

this uninteresting circle. She is condemned either to drink ale with the ‘Squire’ or to visit Lady Huntingdon’s chapel. ‘Miss Robinson was of this sect ; and though Mr. Harris was not a disciple of the Huntingdonian school, he was a constant church visitor on every Sunday. His zeal was indefatigable, and he would frequently fine the rustics (for he was a justice of the peace, and had been sheriff of the county) when he heard them swear, though every third sentence he uttered was attended by an oath that made his hearers shudder.’ Mary becomes a favourite with Mr. Harris, but is hated by the two women ; her fashionable style of costume is especially distasteful to Miss Robinson, who taunts her with the folly of appearing like a woman of fortune, protesting that a lawyer’s wife has no business to dress like a duchess, and that though she may be very accomplished, a good housewife has no occasion for harpsichords and books—they belonging only to women who brought wherewithal to support them. These incidents are worth noting as marking the great change of manners during the last hundred years. At the end of three weeks the newly married pair quit this uncongenial roof and return to London. Mr. Robinson, however, delighted with the reception Mr. Harris has given his young wife, fancies his best hopes confirmed, and launches into a high style of living, handsomely furnishes a new house in Hatton Garden, and buys a carriage and saddle horses. Now begins a life of pleasure and excitement, and Mary, splendidly dressed, is taken to Ranelagh and the Pantheon Concerts, then the most fashionable assemblages in London, where her beauty attracts the attention of some fashionable *roués*—Lord Northington, Lord Lyttleton, Captain Ayscough—who contrive to get introduced to her. She describes Lord Lyttleton as ‘the most accomplished libertine that any age or country has produced,’ but modifies the statement by adding, that his manners were overbearing, insolent, his language licentious, and his person slovenly, even to a degree that was disgusting. These

gentlemen become constant visitors at Robinson's house, hoping to find in this young, vain, and inexperienced girl an easy victim. To favour their plans they lead the husband into dissipation and infidelities with the vilest women, of which they take care to inform her. But through all these temptations she assures us that she remains faithful to her unworthy spouse. In the meantime she is one of the celebrities about town. By day she is seen in the Park dressed *à la paysanne*, riding in a high phaeton with her husband and two or three noble admirers, the hat of every fashionable promenader sweeping the ground before her; at night, at Ranelagh and the Pantheon, patched and powdered and furbelowed like a duchess, she makes a sensation wherever she goes. This splendour is short-lived; ignorant whence he draws his resources, she has often questioned him upon the subject, but he has always evaded her inquiries. Before twelve months have passed the crash comes; it has been all done on credit, on the hope of Mr. Harris's future bounty. Robinson is nothing but an adventurer, who was deeply in debt before his marriage; the creditors become urgent, and put an execution into his house, whilst the fabric of cards topples to the ground, leaving the imprudent pair destitute and homeless.

To such straits were they reduced that she was obliged to go into Wales for her confinement. There she met with a very harsh reception, the old man refusing to render them the slightest assistance. As soon as she was able to leave the house she took refuge for a short time at her grandmother's, at Monmouth. Upon their return to London her husband was immediately arrested for debt; and notwithstanding his bad conduct, she took up her abode with him in the prison. 'During nine months and three weeks never once did I pass the threshold of our dreary habitation, though every effort was made' (by her fashionable lovers) 'to draw me from my scene of domestic attachment.' About this time she published a small volume of poems, with a

dedication to the Duchess of Devonshire, which procured her a personal introduction to that noble lady, who gave her some substantial marks of sympathy, and occasionally corresponded with her. At the end of ten months Robinson by some means contrived to get out of gaol. Soon afterwards Brereton, of Drury Lane, being aware of her old predilection, advised her to try her fortunes upon the stage. Her husband highly approving of what might turn out a very good speculation for himself, she obtained an introduction to Sheridan. The great manager, very much struck by her beauty and fascination as well as by her undoubted abilities, made an appointment in the green-room of Drury Lane. Garrick, Brereton, and himself were present, and she there recited the principal scenes of Juliet to Brereton's Romeo, and this character was fixed on for her appearance on December 10th, 1776. The beautiful Mrs. Robinson was already a notoriety in all places of fashionable resort, and the announcement of her appearance upon the stage crowded the theatre with fashionable spectators.

Success was almost assured by her beauty and notoriety, without reference to her talents, and the curtain fell amidst thunders of applause. It would be difficult to pronounce at the present day upon her merits as an actress. A newspaper of the period, noticing her performance, remarks that she would be better adapted for the deeper and more solemn walks of tragedy, than the tender and passionate Juliet, her face, her voice, her looks, fitting her for the more violent and terrible passions. After playing two or three other parts she went into the provinces, to Bristol, etc., and once more visited her Welsh relations. ‘Though,’ she says, ‘the assumed sanctity of Miss Robinson’s manners condemned dramatic life, the labour was deemed *profitable*, and the supposed immorality was consequently *tolerated*. Several parties both at home and abroad were formed for my amusement. I was consulted as the very oracle of fashion; I was gazed at and examined with the most inquisitive curiosity. Mr.

Robinson, the promising young actress, was a very different person from Mrs. Robinson who had been overwhelmed with sorrow, and came to ask an asylum.<sup>1</sup> Upon her return to London she became the rage; her house was always thronged with visitors, her morning levées crowded with fashionable people, so that she could scarcely find time for study, while, she says, her fashions in dress were followed with flattering avidity. She was *the* celebrity, and courted and flattered by all the great men, whether by birth or genius, of the day. Her husband drew her salary, squandered it in gambling and upon other women, and neglected her upon whom he was then wholly dependent. We now come to that epoch of melancholy celebrity in her life, which conferred upon her that strangely appropriate name, by which she will be remembered as long as the remembrance of that age survives.

She had performed two seasons in tragedy and comedy, when (December 3rd, 1779) 'The Winter's Tale' was commanded by their Majesties, and she was cast for Perdita. She had never yet appeared before royalty. 'By Jove, Mrs. Robinson,' said Smith, who was playing Leontes, 'you will make a conquest of the Prince, for to-night you look handsomer than ever.' The events of that night and those which arose from it, which were destined to cast so lasting and melancholy an interest over the name of 'Perdita Robinson,' I shall give, with a few abbreviations, in her own words: 'I hurried through the first scene, not without embarrassment, owing to the fixed attention with which the Prince of Wales honoured me. Indeed, some flattering remarks which were made by his Royal Highness met my ear as I stood near his box, and I was overwhelmed with confusion. The Prince's particular attention was observed by everyone, and I was again rallied at the end of the play. On the last curtsey the royal family condescendingly returned a bow to the performers: but just as the curtain was falling, my eyes met those of the Prince of Wales; and, with a look that I

*shall never forget*, he gently inclined his head a second time. I felt the compliment, and blushed my gratitude. As I was going to my chair, I again met the royal family crossing the stage. I was again honoured with a very marked and low bow from the Prince of Wales.' Two or three days afterwards, she receives a visit from Lord Malden, who, after much hesitation and apologising, hands her a note. It is addressed to PERDITA. It contains only a few words, 'but those expressive of more than common civility.' They are signed FLORIZEL. She does not guess the writer until Lord Malden informs her it is the Prince of Wales. 'I was astonished; I confess that I was agitated; but I was also somewhat sceptical as to the truth of his assertion. I returned a formal and doubtful answer; and his lordship shortly afterwards took his leave.' She reads the letter a thousand times, but is still doubtful of the writer, half-suspecting it to be an experiment made by Lord Malden upon her vanity. The next evening the Viscount repeats his visit, and holds forth upon the polished and fascinating manners of his Royal Highness, his engaging temper, his amiable sentiments. The day after he brings a second letter; assures her the Prince is most unhappy lest she should be offended at his conduct; he conjures her to go that night to the Oratorio, where he will by some signal convince her, should she be still sceptical upon the point, that he is the writer of the letter. 'I went to the Oratorio; and on my taking my seat in the balcony box, the Prince almost instantaneously observed me. He held the printed bill before his face, and drew his hand across his forehead, still fixing his eyes on me. I was confused, and knew not what to do. My husband was with me, and I was fearful of his observing what passed. Still the Prince continued to make signs, such as moving his hand upon the edge of the box as if writing, then speaking to the Duke of York (then Bishop of Osnaburgh), who also looked towards me with particular attention.' These signs became so marked as to be observed by the audience, and next day

a certain publication observed that there was one passage in Dryden's Ode which seemed particularly interesting to the Prince of Wales, who

‘Gazed on the fair  
Who caused his care,  
And sighed, and looked, and sighed again.’

‘However flattering it might have been to female vanity to know that the most admired and most accomplished Prince in Europe was devotedly attached to me : however dangerous to the heart such idolatry as his Royal Highness, during many months, professed in almost daily letters, which were conveyed to me by Lord Malden, still I declined any interview. I was not insensible to all his powers of attraction ; I thought him one of the most amiable of men. There was a beautiful ingenuousness in his language, a warm and enthusiastic adoration expressed in every letter, which interested and charmed me. During the whole spring, till the theatre closed, this correspondence continued : every day giving me some new assurance of inviolable affection.’ During this time she had never once spoken with him. At length he sent her his miniature. Within the case was a small heart cut in paper ; on one side was written, ‘*Je ne change qu'en mourant* ;’ on the other, ‘Unalterable to my Perdita through life.’ Through the go-between, Lord Malden, she is informed that the Prince is almost frantic at her continual refusals to meet him, and with each letter becomes more and more passionately importunate. ‘The unbounded assurances of lasting affection I received from his Royal Highness in many scores of the most eloquent letters, the contempt which I experienced from my husband, and the perpetual labour which I underwent for his support, at length began to weary my fortitude. Still I was reluctant to become the theme of public animadversion ; and still I remonstrated with my husband on the unkindness of his conduct.’ At length she consents to meet the Prince at Kew. She dines with Lord Malden at the inn on the island between Kew and Brentford.

A boat is to fetch her across in the twilight ; she is landed before the gates of the old Palace, and is met by the Prince and the Duke of York, who are walking down the avenue. But scarcely has the Prince uttered a few words before they are startled by the sound of voices approaching from the Palace. ‘The moon was now rising, and the idea of being overheard, or of his Royal Highness being seen out at so unusual an hour, terrified the whole group. After a few more words of the most affectionate nature uttered by the Prince, we parted, and Lord Malden and myself returned to the island.’ Poor Perdita more than ever in love ! ‘The graces of his person, the irresistible sweetness of his smile, the tenderness of his melodious yet manly voice, will be remembered by me till every vision of this changeful scene be forgotten. Many and frequent were the interviews which afterwards took place at this romantic spot ; our walks sometimes continued till past midnight ; the Duke of York and Lord Malden were always of the party ; our conversation was composed of general topics. The Prince had from his infancy been wholly secluded, and naturally took much pleasure in conversing about the busy world, its manners and pursuits, characters and scenery. Nothing could be more delightful or more rational than our midnight perambulations. I always wore a dark-coloured habit ; the rest of our party generally wrapped themselves in great-coats to disguise them, except the Duke of York, who almost universally alarmed us by the display of a buff-coat, the most conspicuous colour he could have selected for an adventure of this nature. The polished and fascinating ingenuousness of his Royal Highness’s manners contributed not a little to enliven our promenades. He sang with exquisite taste ; and the tones of his voice breaking upon the silence of the night have often appeared upon my entranced senses like more than mortal melody . . . . The Duke of York was now on the eve of quitting the country for Hanover ; the Prince was also on the point of receiving his first establishment ; and

the apprehension that this attachment might injure his Royal Highness in the opinion of the world rendered caution of the utmost importance. A considerable time elapsed in these scenes of visionary happiness. The Prince's attachment seemed to increase daily, and I considered myself as the most blest of human beings.'

She had by this time relinquished her profession, her last appearance upon the stage being in May, 1780, in the character of Sir Harry Revel in the comedy of 'The Miniature Picture,' and as 'The Irish Widow.' 'On entering the green-room, I informed Mr. Moody, who played in the farce, that I should appear no more after that night; and, endeavouring to smile while I sang, I repeated :

"Oh joy to you all in full measure,  
So wishes and prays the Widow Brady!"

which were the last lines of my song in "The Irish Widow." This effort to conceal the emotion I felt on quitting a profession I enthusiastically loved was of short duration; and I burst into tears on my appearance. My regret at recollecting that I was treading for the last time the boards where I had so often received the most gratifying testimonies of the public approbation, that I was flying from a happy certainty perhaps to pursue the phantom disappointment, nearly overwhelmed my faculties, and for some time deprived me of the power of articulation.'

'The daily prints now indulged the malice of my enemies by the most scandalous paragraphs respecting the Prince of Wales and myself. I found it was too late to stop the augmenting torrent of abuse that was poured upon me from all quarters. Whenever I appeared in public, I was overwhelmed by the gazing of the multitude. I was frequently obliged to quit Ranelagh, owing to the crowd which, with staring curiosity, had assembled round my box; and, even in the streets of the metropolis, I scarcely ventured to enter a shop without experiencing the greatest inconvenience. Many

hours have I waited till the crowd dispersed which surrounded my carriage in expectation of my quitting the shop. But, thank Heaven! my heart was not framed in the mould of callous effrontery. I shuddered at the gulf before me, and felt small gratification in the knowledge of having taken a step which many who condemned would have been no less willing to imitate, had they been placed in the same situation.' The Prince omitted no mark of devotion it was possible to bestow, even to presenting her with a bond for £20,000 upon his coming of age. 'I' was surprised at receiving this,' she writes; 'the idea of interest had never entered into my mind. Secure in the possession of his heart, I had in that delightful certainty counted all my future treasures. I had refused many splendid gifts, which he had proposed ordering for me at Grey's and other jewellers'. The Prince presented to me a few trifling ornaments, not exceeding one hundred guineas. Even these, on our separation, I returned by the hands of General Lake.'

But soon was she to be roughly awakened from this fool's paradise. His Royal Highness's 'establishment' had scarcely been arranged, when she received a letter from him briefly telling her, '*We must meet no more.*' 'And now suffer me to call God to witness that I was unconscious why this decision had taken place; only two days previous to this letter being written I had seen the Prince at Kew, and his affection appeared to be boundless as it was undiminished.' Not two months previously he had sought opportunities of markedly, and, as it seemed, imprudently, distinguishing her in public. At the birth-night ball he had placed her in the chamberlain's box, and publicly sent to her two rosebuds, which a lady of rank had just presented to him, and commanded her to wear them in her bosom in the sight of the donor. At all places of public resort, at reviews, at theatres, he paid her like daring attentions. The whole affair was probably a deliberate plan from beginning to end. Those moonlight walks and nocturnal meetings had thrown a halo of poetry about the con-

nection, and were the surest means of subduing her romantic and sentimental temperament. There is nothing wonderful in the fact that a young and neglected wife, united to an unworthy and dissipated husband who lived upon her earnings, should listen to the passionate love of a handsome and accomplished prince, one 'framed to make women false,' for, although towards middle age he became coarse and bloated, there can be no question that in his early youth George IV. was not, as regards mere manners, undeserving of that title which is now never quoted without a sneer, 'the first gentleman in Europe.' Indeed so many contemporaries of his youthful days, who are above suspicion of being mere flatterers, testify to the irresistible fascination of his manners that it is impossible to be sceptical upon the point.

Whether the Prince ever felt any stronger attachment for Perdita than for his other victims it would be difficult to assert, but he decidedly made her the scapegoat of his interests. There had been some squabbling over the establishment, and it was conceded to him on condition that he should sacrifice his mistress to public opinion. She wrote him agonising letters, but he made no reply; she went to Windsor, where he was then staying, but the selfish Prince would not see her. 'Women of every description were emulous of attracting his Royal Highness's attention. Alas ! I had neither rank nor power to oppose such adversaries. Every engine of female malice was set in motion to destroy my repose, and every petty calumny was repeated with ten-fold embellishments. Tales of the most infamous and glaring falsehood were invented, and I was again assailed by pamphlets, by paragraphs, by caricatures, and all the artillery of slander.' Again she writes in the most agonising terms to her faithless lover, and at length he deigns to reply in a letter of eloquent evasions. She thinks of returning to the stage, but her friends are fearful of the reception an audience may accord her; she is overwhelmed with debts to the amount of seven thousand pounds, and persecuted and

insulted by harsh creditors. By-and-by the Prince consents to meet her at Lord Malden's house, declares he has never ceased to love her, and an apparent reunion takes place. But the very next day, in Hyde Park, he turns away his head, and affects not to know or see her. Yet, overwhelmed as she is by this blow, she cannot find in her heart one thought of resentment against her heartless seducer. ‘I did then, and ever shall, consider his mind as nobly and honourably organised. Nor could I teach myself to believe that a heart the seat of so many virtues could possibly become inhuman and unjust.’ Such love should have been lavished upon a more worthy object. By the persuasion of her friends, however, she claims the bond he has sent her in the moment of his first ardour, and through Mr. Fox ultimately obtains an annuity of five hundred a year.

Of all the many black spots which rest upon the character of this heartless Prince, there are few blacker than his treatment of this unfortunate lady: and how little blame was considered to be attached to her, by those whom envy and malice did not render partial judges, is proved by the sympathy and friendship which she obtained from many persons of high standing in society. She paid a visit to Paris, where her appearance excited great curiosity; she was feted by the Duc d'Orléans, probably with an object which, however, he never obtained; even Marie Antoinette desired to be introduced to ‘la belle Anglaise,’ and presented her with a purse knitted by her own fingers. There is little doubt she would have ultimately returned to the stage but for a terrible calamity which now beset her. While travelling abroad she went to sleep in her chaise with the windows open, caught a violent cold, which turned to rheumatics, and at twenty-four she had entirely lost the use of her limbs. Thus at an early age, when few women have scarcely more than entered into the world, she had been a wife, a mother, a successful actress, a prince's mistress, and—this terrible calamity had closed her career. Here is a sketch of her at this period by a woman's

bitter pen: ‘On a table in one of the waiting-rooms of the Opera House was seated a woman of fashionable appearance, still beautiful, but not in the bloom of beauty’s pride. She was not noticed save by the eye of pity. In a few moments two liveried servants came to her, and took from their pockets long white sleeves, which they drew on their arms : they then lifted her up and conveyed her to her carriage—it was the then helpless, paralytic *Perdita*.’ She turned authoress, and wrote several volumes of poetry of the Della Cruscan school, and some novels, not without merit, but they have long since sunk into oblivion. Travelling to different places, trying different medicinal waters, all without effect, greatly reduced her means. She appealed to her noble friends for payment of money she had lent them in her prosperity. ‘Without your aid,’ she writes to one, ‘I cannot make trial of the Bristol waters, the only remedy that presents to me any hope of preserving my existence.’ The loan was not only not returned, but the letter remained unanswered. Boaden describes her in her latter years reclining helplessly in her chaise, a few friends about her, conversing quietly, a smile upon her lips, uttering no plaint, although her forehead was bedewed with drops of agony.

After enduring years of suffering—and what affliction could have been more terrible to this woman, whose beauty had once enslaved every heart that came within its influence?—she expired, at Englefield Green, at the close of 1799, bequeathing another sad story to the chronicles of royal mistresses. She is buried in Old Windsor church-yard.

After the great Siddons herself, the most famous actress of the Kemble period was MRS. JORDAN. The story of her life is as sad and almost as romantic as even that of ‘*Perdita*.’ She was born at Waterford, in the year 1762. Her mother, Miss Grace Philips, was the daughter of a poor Welsh clergyman, and, together with her two sisters, took to the stage. Of the father, Bland, little is known ; his family

objected to the marriage, and obtained its nullification, on the grounds of his being a minor. But he did not desert his wife, at least for a time, for we hear of him occupying the menial office of scene-shifter in the same theatre with her ; but he disappears early out of the history, and is heard of no more. Dorothy—so was our heroine christened, although she afterwards changed it to Dora—made her first appearance upon the Dublin stage, under the name of Miss Francis, as Phœbe in ‘As You Like It,’ when little more than a child. The slight glimpses we obtain of her early years are sadly suggestive. ‘From my first starting in life at the age of fourteen, I have always had a large family to support. My mother was a duty. But on brothers and sisters I have lavished more than can be supposed.’ Poor child ! Provincial salaries were then but miserable pittances, and we can imagine the struggles and privations she must have undergone. The mother was evidently a listless lymphatic personage with little moral strength, weakly dependent upon her daughter for support, loving her doubtless, in that maudlin maternal fashion which is but a variety of selfishness, and regarding her child’s interests only through the medium of her own ; weakly yielding to circumstances, however evil or dishonourable might be their results, with no other resistance than whimpers and sighs over her hard fate, rather than risk the wretched pittance that stood between her and absolute privation. Daly, the manager of the Dublin theatre at this time, was a most notorious scoundrel, who had defended his libertinism in sixteen duels ; he would insidiously force loans upon the poor necessitous actresses, and then suddenly demand the payment with threats of arrest and discharge ; if this did not suffice, if the proposed victim had the courage to face starvation, he did not scruple to resort to acts of violence, which would now send him to penal servitude, but which in the Ireland of that day seem to have gone unpunished. Miss Francis, it would appear from the hints of her

biographer, Boaden, resisted his advances and met the usual fate. At sixteen, she had already made a hit in one of her future great parts, *Priscilla Tomboy*, in 'The Romp.' A poor lieutenant in a marching regiment fell desperately in love with her, and offered to make her his wife. But the mother, foreseeing the future harvest her talents would bring forth, stepped between, and fearing to have the goose with the golden eggs snatched from her, carried it off to England.

Tate Wilkinson was an old friend of Mrs. Bland's, and to Leeds, where his company was then performing, she and her family wended their way. Faint and weary, their appearance denoting the penury of their circumstances, they arrived at the manager's house. The mother expatiated with all the eagerness of their desperate condition upon her daughter's talents. 'What is her line—tragedy, comedy, or opera?' he inquired. 'All!' The reply was startling, and far from reassuring in its apparent exaggeration. Wilkinson describes the scene in his '*Wandering Patentee*.' 'Upon my suddenly seeing the family I withdrew for half an hour to reflect on what I should do, fearing a scrape from such a loaded connection, and not the least trait of comic power in the features or manners of the young lady, indeed quite the reverse—dejected, melancholy, tears in her eyes, and a languor that, without the help of words, pleaded wonderfully for assistance.' He asked her to recite a speech, but she was too tired and worn to comply. Upon which he brought out a bottle of Madeira, and began to talk over old times with Mrs. Bland. The wine and cheerful conversation soon revived her spirits, and again he made a request for 'a taste of her quality.' She no longer refused, and gave a speech of *Calista's*, from '*The Fair Penitent*.' The exquisite and plaintive melody of her voice, the distinctiveness of her articulation, the truth and nature that looked through her eyes, affected the old actor deeply. An engagement was concluded, and her opening part was to be *Calista*: after which she requested to be allowed to sing '*The Greenwood*

Laddie,' a song in which she had made a great hit in Dublin. Her success exceeded all expectation. 'I was not only charmed,' says Tate, 'but the public also, and still more at what I feared would spoil the whole - the absurdity of Calista after her death jumping forth and singing a ballad : but on she came, in a frock and a little mob cap, and sung the song with such effect that I was fascinated.' From Leeds she proceeded with the company to York, and there changed her name from Miss Francis to Mrs. Jordan. The 'Mrs.' was substituted for the Miss at the dying request of an aunt, jealous of the family honour, and who left the young actress her wardrobe, a very valuable bequest to one in Dora's circumstances, on that condition. The name was selected by the manager—there had been a council upon the subject. 'You have crossed the water, so I'll call you Jordan,' he cried.

Her success in the cathedral city was as great as it had been at Leeds. Smith, of Drury Lane, was there at the time, it being the race week, and was so charmed by her performances that he attended the theatre every night. He even made overtures to her to come to London ; but Tate had prudently bound her by articles for three years, at one guinea and a half a week, and nothing could be done until that term expired. In his 'Wandering Patentee' he gives some amusing anecdotes of her at this period. There was at the time a great, self-styled critic at York —such men were to be found in almost every town in the old theatrical days —a Mr. Cornelius Swan, who had annotated and altered Shakespeare, but whose great passion was to give lessons to every performer of merit who came to the city. He pretended to number John Kemble himself among his pupils. Tate introduced Mrs. Jordan to this luminary, and he said *he would teach her to act*. When she was ill, he was admitted to the little bed-chamber, where, by the side of the bed, with Mrs. Bland's old red cloak round his neck, he would sit and instruct his pupil in the part of Zara. ' You must revive

that tragedy, Wilkinson,' said he, 'for I have given the Jordan but three lessons, and she is so adroit at receiving my instructions, that I declare she repeats the character as well as Mrs. Cibber ever did : nay, let me do the Jordan justice, for I do not exceed the truth when I declare, Jordan speaks it as well as I could *myself*.' Cornelius, in his fondness, adopted her as his child, but at his death did not leave her a shilling. As a matter of course, all the ladies of the company were desperately jealous of the new-comer who so overleaped them, and displayed their mortification in sneers and annoyances, until it was remarked by the audience that she constantly came upon the stage with her eyes red with weeping. Upon which the truth caine out ; this only confirmed the public in her favour, and gave a new defeat to her enemies. Mrs. Bland, however, was not behind her daughter's rivals in malice and petty spite ; sitting at the wing, one night, while a certain Mrs. Robinson, a very beautiful woman, was playing Isabella, she threw her apron over her eyes and begged Tate as an act of kindness to tell her when 'that fright' had done acting and speaking, for it was so horrid she could not look at her.

At length she arrived at the end of the three years' engagement, and the long-wished-for time had come when her talents were to be transferred to a more famous sphere than that ruled over by the Yorkshire manager. Her rivals prophesied failure, and their vaticinations were echoed by a greater authority. Mrs. Siddons acted with her while starring in the north, and being told of her speedy removal to the metropolis, replied, with that tragedy queen's usual charitableness, that she had better remain where she was than venture upon the London boards. The speaker had probably forgotten that Woodfall had once given her similar advice—to keep to small country theatres, as she was too weak for any other. 'Mrs. Jordan's last appearance as a lady of my company at York,' writes Tate, 'was on Friday, September 2, 1785, and her last night with me that year as a Yorkshire

comedian was at Wakefield, on Friday, September 9, 1785, in the "Poor Soldier," from whence she set off with a doubtful heart for London city, dubious of success : but in a few weeks she made her *début*, and in a few nights after being seen, was so established in fame and favour, and so increasing on the public mind, that it is needless for me to tell the reader what he and she and everybody knows, how she fascinated, nay intoxicated, I may say, the London audience, and played at will-o'-the-wisp, for as she moved they followed.'

'Whatever the rehearsals on the stage of Drury Lane might have shown of the new actress,' says Boaden, 'the out-of-door world, I remember, was not much assailed ; the puff-preliminary had not been greatly resorted to, and the common inquiries produced the usual answers of discretion. "I think she *is* clever ; one thing I can tell you, she is like nothing you have been used to. Her laugh is good ; but then she is, or seems to be, very nervous. We shall see ; but I am sure we want *something*." At length, on Tuesday, the 18th October, 1785, the curtain drew up to the "Country Girl," in which she was to perform Peggy. This was an alteration by Garrick of the "Country Wife" of Wycherley. 'Perhaps no actress ever excited so much laughter. The low comedian has a hundred resorts by which risibility may be produced ; but the actress has nothing beyond the mere words she utters, but what is drawn from her own hilarity and the expression of features which never submit to exaggeration. How exactly had this child of Nature calculated her efficacy that no intention on her part was ever missed, and from first to last the audience responded uniformly in an astonishment of delight. In the third act they saw more clearly what gave the elasticity to her step ; she is made to assume the male attire, and the great painter of the age pronounced her figure the neatest and most perfect in symmetry he had ever seen.' Mrs. Inchbald says : 'She at once displayed such consummate art, with such bewitching nature,

such excellent sense, and such innocent simplicity, that her auditors were boundless in their plaudits, and so warm in her praises when they left the theatre, that their friends at home would not give credit to the extent of their eulogiums.' Mrs. Jordan first conceived her idea of hoydens from seeing a Mrs. Brown, one of Tate Wilkinson's company, in those parts. When that lady afterwards appeared at Covent Garden as Miss Prue, people could only see an imitation of their favourite actress, and admirable as was her performance, she made no impression.

Mrs. Jordan's first serious part was Viola in 'The Twelfth Night,' in which she appeared on the 11th November. The London actresses were no more generous to her success than had been the provincial. "'Tis well enough,' they sneered, 'while she can romp with a jump and a laugh, but what will they say to her in the loving and beloved Viola?' 'Why,' adds Boaden, 'that the mere melody of her utterance brought tears into the eyes, and that passion had never had so modest and enchanting an interpreter.' Her acting in this part has been described by Elia in one of his most exquisite passages: 'Those,' he says, 'who have only seen Mrs. Jordan within the last ten or fifteen years, can have no adequate idea of her performance of such parts as Ophelia, Helena in "All's Well that Ends Well," and Viola in this play. Her voice had latterly acquired a coarseness, which suited well enough with her Nells and Hoydens; but in those days it sank, with her steady melting eye, into the heart. Her joyous parts (in which her memory now chiefly lives) in her youth were outdone by her plaintive ones. There is no giving an account how she delivered the disguised story of her love for Orsino. It was no set speech that she had foreseen, so as to weave it into an harmonious period, line necessarily following line, to make up the music. Yet I have heard it so spoken, or rather *read*, not without its grace and beauty; but when she had declared her sister's history to be a "blank," and that "she never told her love," there was a pause, as if the story had

ended ; and then the image of the “worm i’ the bud” came up as a new suggestion, and the brightened image of “patience” still followed after that, as by some growing, and not mechanical, process, thought springing up after thought, I would almost say, as they were watered by her tears. So in those fine lines :

““Write loyal cantos of contemned love,  
Hollo your name to the reverberate hills.”

There was no preparation in the foregoing image made for that which was to follow. She used no rhetoric in her passion, or it was nature’s own rhetoric, most legitimate then when it seemed altogether without rule or law.’

In after years, when she had passed the meridian of her powers, her old friend Sir Jonah Barrington once inquired : ‘ How happens it that you still exceed all your profession, even in characters not so adapted to you now as when I first saw you ? How do you contrive to be so buoyant, nay, so childish, on the stage, whilst you lose half your spirits and degenerate into gravity the moment you are off it ? ’ ‘ Old habits,’ replied Mrs. Jordan ; ‘ had I formerly studied my positions, weighed my words, and measured my sentences, I should have been artificial, and they might have hissed me : so, when I had got the words well by heart, I told Nature I was then at *her* service, to do whatever she thought proper with my feet, legs, hands, arms, and features. To her I left the whole matter ; I became, in fact, merely her puppet, and never interfered further myself in the business. I heard the audience laugh at me, and I laughed at myself ; they laughed again, so did I, and they gave me credit for matters I knew very little about, and for which Dame Nature, not I, should have received their approbation. The best rule for a performer is to forget, if possible, that any audience is listening. We perform best of all in our closets, and next best to crowded houses ; but I scarcely ever saw a good performer who was always eyeing the audience.’ The charm

of her acting was not to be analysed. A friend once told her he had detected it. ‘It is your *swindling* laugh,’ he said; ‘you have caught the hearty enjoyment of unrestrained infancy, delighting in its own buoyancy: and you have preserved this in children of a larger growth, who in the world are checked and blighted by decorum and art, authority and hypocrisy.’ That these eulogies are not the exaggerations of a few enthusiastic admirers is proved by their universality. There were critics who carped even at the Siddons herself, and placed Mrs. Pritchard and Mrs. Cibber before her; but all agreed with marvellous unanimity that Mrs. Jordan was inimitable—not even the memory of Kitty Clive could cast a shadow upon her brilliancy. Leigh Hunt, who, however, wrote only of her latter years, remarks that in tragedy she had a monotonous plaintiveness, as though labouring to impress something very fine, like a person spouting a laborious quotation. ‘But in comedy,’ he adds, ‘she seems to speak with all her soul; her voice, pregnant with melancholy, delights the ear with a peculiar and exquisite fulness, and with an emphasis that appears the result of certain convictions; yet these convictions are the effect of a sensibility willing to be convinced, rather than of a judgment weighing its reason; her heart always precedes her speech, which follows with the readiest and happiest acquiescence. The subjection of the manner to the feelings has rendered Mrs. Jordan, in her younger days, the most natural actress of childhood, of its bursts of disposition and its fitful happiness.’ Even stern Hazlitt is equally laudatory: ‘Mrs. Jordan’s excellencies were all natural to her. It was not as an actress, but as *herself*, that she charmed everyone. Nature had formed her in her most prodigal humour; and when Nature is in the humour to make a woman all that is delightful, she does it most effectually. Her face, her tones, her manner, were irresistible; her smile had the effect of sunshine, and her laugh did one good to hear it; her voice was eloquence itself: it seemed as if her heart were always

at her mouth. She was all gaiety, openness, and good-nature ; she rioted in her fine animal spirits, and gave more pleasure than any other actress, because she had the greatest spirit of enjoyment herself.' Macready, in his '*Reminiscences*,' has also left an enthusiastic record of the impression made upon him by her matchless powers : ' If Mrs. Siddons,' he says, ' appeared a personification of the Tragic Muse, certainly all the attributes of Thalia were most joyously combined in Mrs. Jordan. With a spirit of fun that would have out-laughed Puck himself, there was a discrimination, an identity with her character, an artistic arrangement of the scene, that made all appear spontaneous and accidental, though elaborated with the greatest care. Her voice was one of the most melodious I ever heard, which she could vary by certain bass tones, that would have disturbed the gravity of a hermit ; and who that once heard that laugh of hers could ever forget it ? The words of Milman would have applied well to her : " Oh, the words laughed on her lips !" Mrs. Nesbitt, the charming actress of a later day, had a fascinating power in the sweetly-ringing notes of her hearty mirth. But Mrs. Jordan's laugh was so rich, so apparently irrepressible, so deliciously self-enjoying, as to be at all times irresistible. The contagious power would have broken down the conventional serenity of Lord Chesterfield himself.'

When Mrs. Jordan came to London, tragedy, under Siddons, entirely monopolised the town, and on her off-nights the actors performed to empty benches. But with the arrival of the new goddess all was changed, and the houses were as crowded to her performances as to those of her tragic rival. In the line she chose for herself she had no rival. High tragedy she left to Siddons ; high comedy, for which she had not the polish and elegance of manners, to Miss Farren ; but the romps, the boys, 'the breeches' parts,' and the youthful and tender heroines of serious plays she entirely monopolised. In the last, however, she was not always successful. Sheridan was greatly

dissatisfied with her rendering of Cora, in his ‘Pizarro,’ and her Imogen lacked power and dignity. In Rosalind she was greatly admired, but, it appears, did not admire herself. ‘Mrs. Jordan,’ says John Taylor, in ‘Records of my Life,’ ‘though so full of spirit and apparently of self-confidence, was by no means vain of her acting. I remember sitting with her one night in the green-room of Covent Garden Theatre, when she was about to perform the part of Rosalind in “As You Like It.” I happened to mention an actor who had recently appeared with wonderful success, and expressed my surprise at the public taste in this instance. ‘Oh, Mr. Taylor, don’t mention public taste,’ said she, ‘for if the public had any taste, how could they hear me in the part I play to-night, and which is far above my habits and pretensions.’ Yet this was one of the characters in which she was so popular. Ere the end of the first season, her salary, which had begun at £4, was tripled, with the addition of two benefits. Following the pernicious custom introduced by Mrs. Siddons, she now departed upon a provincial tour, and one of the first places she visited was Leeds. Not a twelvemonth had passed since she had played there at a guinea and a half a week, and taken a benefit to empty benches; her terms were now half the receipts, after £15 had been deducted for expenses, and the house was crammed to the ceiling. The only test of merit to a provincial audience is the metropolitan stamp. The great hit of her next season at Drury Lane was Miss Prue, in Congreve’s ‘Love for Love,’ an inimitable performance, as may be imagined from her style. Sir Harry Wildair came two seasons afterwards, and never had anything been seen like it since Peg Woffington played that delightful rake. Little Pickle in ‘The Spoiled Child,’ and Nell in ‘The Devil to Pay,’ were also added to her list of successes.

It was in 1790 that her connection with the Duke of Clarence commenced. She had been living for some time under the protection of Mr. Ford, the son of one of the pro-

prietors of Drury Lane, a City magistrate. It was generally believed at the time that they were legally married, as the lady took his name and had two daughters by him. When the Duke made overtures to her, she frankly told her protector, and offered to decline them if he would make her his wife. He refused, but afterwards pursued her with a malignancy which was as evil as it was despicable. He appears, according to Boaden, to have been a strange, unamiable man, of whom even the persons he constantly met knew little or nothing. The Duke was passionately fond of her, established her at Bushey, treated her as an honoured and beloved wife, and exacted from all who came thither a like respect. And during the twenty years they thus lived together her conduct was as unexceptionable as though she had indeed been the Duchess. But public opinion resented the breach of moral decorum. Hissed by the audience, abused in the public prints, insulted in and out of the theatre, she paid heavy penalties for her elevation. One morning, being a little petulant at rehearsal, Wroughton retorted with, 'Why, you are grand, Madam, quite the Duchess again this morning.' 'Very likely,' she replied, 'for you are not the first person this day who has descended ironically to honour me with this title.' Then, with all her characteristic humour, she told that having that morning discharged her Irish cook for impertinence, and paid the wages due to her, the woman banged a shilling down upon the table, crying, 'Arrah, my honey, with this thirteener, won't I sit in the gallery, and won't your Royal Grace give me a curtsey—and won't I give your Royal Highness a howl and a hiss into the bargain!'

Her acting as Angela did something towards securing the extraordinary success of 'Monk' Lewis's once famous melodrama of 'The Castle Spectre,' which brought thousands to Sheridan's pocket in a forty-six nights' run. Lewis, arguing a point one day with the manager, offered to bet him all the money the play had brought into the treasury. 'No, I

won't do that,' said Sheridan, 'but I'll bet you all it's worth.' At King's farewell benefit (1812), Mrs. Jordan appeared for the first time as Lady Teazle; for she would never attempt the part until Miss Farren had quitted the stage. Her conception differed essentially from her predecessors' in this: according to their rendering the six months of fashionable life had totally divested my lady of her original habits: they did not *act* the fine lady, they seemed to have never occupied any other station than their present. Mrs. Jordan thought the rather coarse pleasantries which her ladyship lavished upon Sir Peter were more in the tone of her *former* than her present condition, and she therefore returned to its frank and abrupt discontent: she quarrelled with her old rustic petulance, and showed her natural complexion. Yet she was said to want the recovering dignity of Mrs. Abington when she advanced before the prostrate screen. It is strange, considering her great genius, that she should have been so little written for, but there was a positive dearth of dramatists at this time, if we except melodramatists, who were plentiful enough. The only one genuine comedy part she created was the Widow Cheerly, in Cherry's 'Soldier's Daughter.'

But the years have been rolling on swiftly since the faultless form of twenty years first bounded upon the London stage, since those resistless eyes first fascinated every spectator, since that joyous laugh first thrilled every heart; the fragile figure has become too developed for grace, the girlish charm of the features is gone; the genius and the wonderful laugh are still left, but the public begin to think she does not exactly *look* Priscilla Tomboy, Little Pickle, or Miss Prue. And yet only twenty-four years have elapsed since that notable first night of 'The Country Girl.' What are twenty-four years amidst the brilliant triumphs of the stage? Looking back they seem but yesterday. And when at length the sense of failing powers and faded beauty is forced upon the actress, it is like waking her from a delicious dream, one that can

never come again. The Duke had long wished her to retire from professional life, for he had been quicker than she, and naturally so, to perceive the dimming of the star. She had promised to retire when Mrs. Siddons did so. Her loss in jewels and dresses in the destruction of Drury Lane was very large. Writing to a friend just afterwards, she says : ‘ In obedience to the Duke’s wishes I have withdrawn myself, at least for the present, until there is a royal theatre for me to appear in.’ She acted one night at the Opera House, whither the company had been transferred, for the benefit of the humbler sufferers by the fire. In another letter she intimated that, as it would possibly be her last appearance, a notification to that effect might be passed round the boxes. Yet almost immediately afterwards we find her starting on a starring tour through the provinces. But a terrible and most unexpected blow suddenly fell upon her. While acting at Cheltenham she received a letter from the Duke to meet him at Maidenhead, there to bid each other farewell. It was the first intimation of the coming storm. That night she was to play Nell, in ‘The Devil to Pay.’ She arrived at the theatre prostrated by a succession of fainting fits. She struggled through the part, however, until Jobson arrived at the passage where he has to accuse the conjuror of making her laughing drunk. Instead of a laugh she burst into tears. With great presence of mind the actor altered the text to ‘Why, Nell, the conjuror has not only made thee drunk, but *crying* drunk.’ After the curtain fell she was put into a chariot, in her stage dress, to keep her appointment with the Duke. The interview was, it need not be remarked, a strictly private one. Enemies had been constantly at work, Ford among the number, to poison the Duke’s mind against her, and various infamous reports, all of which circumstantial evidence proves to have been false, were circulated against her. But there had been no quarrel, no warning, although rumours of a separation were bruited about, whether or not inspired by a knowledge of his intentions, of which she had

been kept purposely in ignorance, it is impossible to determine. The connection had from the first exposed the Duke to constant attacks and remonstrances from real and pretended moralists, and constant dripping will wear a stone, much less a lover's constancy : then it was so much more easy to purge one's self of a pleasant sin when the sin had grown fat and middle-aged ; again, there was that clinging to the stage, of which he undoubtedly disapproved, and a daughter, by a former connection, and her husband, not very reputable personages, as we shall presently see. Doubtless there had been a growing dissatisfaction, and some new rumour or some new annoyance, perhaps trifling in itself, had, as it often will, fanned the smouldering fire into a flame.

'My mind,' she says, in a letter written to a friend soon after the separation, 'is beginning to feel somewhat reconciled to the shock and surprise it has lately received ; for could you or the world believe that we never had for twenty years the semblance of a quarrel ? But this is so well known in our domestic circle that the astonishment is the greater. Money, money, my good friend, or the want of it, has, I am convinced, made him at this moment the most wretched of men ; but having done wrong he does not like to retract. But with all his excellent qualities, his domestic virtues, his love for his lovely children, what must he not at this moment suffer ? His distress should have been relieved before ; but this is *entre nous*. All his letters are full of the most unqualified praise of my conduct ; and it is the most heartfelt blessing to know that, to the best of my power, I have endeavoured to deserve it. I have received the greatest kindness and attention from the R——t' (the Regent) 'and every branch of the royal family, who in the most unreserved terms deplore this melancholy business. The whole correspondence is before the R——t, and I am proud to add that my past and present conduct has secured me a friend who declares he will never forsake me. "My forbearance," he says, "is beyond what he could have imagined !" But what

will not a woman do who is firmly and sincerely attached? Had he left me to starve, I never would have uttered a word to his disadvantage. I enclose you two other letters, and in a day or two you shall have more, the rest being in the hands of the R—t. And now, my dear friend, do not hear the Duke of Clarence unfairly abused. He has done wrong, and he is suffering for it. But as far as he has left it in his own power he is doing everything *kind* and *noble*, even to the distressing himself.'

This sympathy of the royal family sufficiently proves that no disgraceful act on her part brought about the separation, while the affectionate terms in which she pleaded for the man who had cast her off displayed the generosity of her mind. She continued to play both in London and the provinces until 1814, and during the last year of her professional career is said to have realised £7,000—a statement, however, which is open to doubt. Her eldest daughter, Frances, had married a Mr. Alsop, who was a clerk in the Ordnance Office. It was an unhappy match; he appears to have been a dissolute, extravagant man, who ultimately, overwhelmed with debt, was obliged to quit the country. Previous to this, Mrs. Jordan had given him acceptances in blank upon stamped paper, which she supposed were for small amounts, but which he afterwards filled in for large sums. Before he left England she paid the money for the insurance of his life, and making her daughter an allowance, sent her into Wales. This lady, whose character was far from immaculate, afterwards went upon the stage, and appeared in 1815 as Rosalind. Hazlitt said, 'She played the part with a certain degree of arch humour, but no more like her mother than we to Hercules.'

Mrs. Jordan and the Duke, notwithstanding their separation, continued to be the subject of attack in the scurrilous newspapers and public prints of the day, until Mr. Barton, of the Mint, published a defence of his Royal Highness, in which he stated the terms of the separation as arranged by

himself. According to this statement she was allowed £1,500 a year for her maintenance, and £600 for carriages and horses for her four daughters, by the Duke, and these were to remain under her care until a certain age, *provided she did not resume her profession*, in which event they were to be delivered over to his custody, she still being allowed the £1,500 a year for her own use, and £800 for her married daughters. With this statement was published the following letter from Mrs. Jordan, which I subjoin for the sake of the explanation it affords, and for the admirable light in which it places her : ‘SIR,—Though I did not see the morning print that contained the paragraph alluded to in your liberal and respectable paper of yesterday, yet I was not long left in ignorance of the abuse it poured out against me. This I would silently have submitted to, but I was by no means aware that the writer of it had taken the opportunity of throwing out insinuations which he thought might be injurious to a no less honourable than illustrious personage. In the love of truth, and in justice to his Royal Highness, I think it my duty, publicly and unequivocally, to declare that his liberality towards me has been noble and generous in the *highest degree*; but, not having it in his power to extend his bounty beyond the term of his own existence, he has, with his accustomed goodness and consideration, allowed me to endeavour to make that provision for myself which an event, that better feelings than those of *interest* make me hope I shall never live to see, would entirely deprive me of. This, then, sir, is my motive for returning to my profession. I am too happy in having every reason to hope and believe that, under these circumstances, I shall not offend the public at *large* by seeking their support and *protection*; and, while I feel that I possess those, I shall patiently submit to that species of unmanly persecution which a female so particularly situated must always be subject to. Ever ready to acknowledge my deficiencies in every respect, I trust, I may add, that I shall never be found wanting in candour and

gratitude—not forgetful of the care that every individual should feel for the good opinion of the public.—I am, sir, etc., your much obliged, humble servant,

‘DORA JORDAN.’

Writing to a friend, she says: ‘When everything is adjusted, it will be impossible for me to remain in England. I shall, therefore, go abroad, appropriating as much as I can spare of the remainder of my income to pay my debts.’ According to every account these debts amounted to no more than £2,000. But even had they been double that amount, they should have been a mere bagatelle to a woman who had made a fortune by her profession, who was *supposed* to have just been repaid, *with interest*, a considerable sum lent to the Duke of Clarence, and to be in receipt of £1,500 a year. Her charities were considerable, and all her family were more or less dependent upon her; two sons, the Fitzclarences, were in the Army, and probably drew heavily upon her resources. That a large portion of her earnings, during the twenty years they had been together, had been given over to the Duke was an acknowledged fact, but it was averred that on the separation all had been paid back with interest, and that she herself signed a receipt for the same; and yet, within a few years, during which she earned thousands more, we find her flying from her creditors for debts amounting to £2,000. The probabilities are that her devotion induced her to sign an acquittance for which she received no equivalent. If so, we have an explanation of the Regent’s ambiguous phrase, which she quotes in her letter: ‘*My forbearance is beyond what he could have imagined?*’ The payment even of the allowance is incompatible with the poverty in which her last days were passed. The picture of those days, as drawn by her friend Sir Jonah, is sad enough: ‘The apartments she occupied at St. Cloud were in a house in the square adjoining the palace. This house was large, gloomy, cold, and inconvenient, just the sort of place

which would tell in a description in romance. In fact, it looked to me almost in a state of dilapidation. I could not, I am sure, wander over it at night without a superstitious feeling. The rooms were numerous, but small ; the furniture scanty, old, and tattered. The hotel had obviously once belonged to some nobleman, and a long, lofty, flagged gallery stretched from one wing of it to the other. Mrs. Jordan's chambers were shabby ; no English comforts solaced her in her later moments. In her little drawing-room, a small old sofa was the best-looking piece of furniture. On this she constantly reclined, and on this she died. The garden in her time was overgrown with weeds, and two melancholy cypress-trees pointed, and almost confined, her reflections to the grave.<sup>\*</sup> So poor did she seem that a kind-hearted person even offered her assistance. Her circumstances, however, were not so bad as that, for she still retained some jewels of value, and there was a balance of a hundred pounds in the bank after her death. Her effects, however, were sworn under £300. What, then, became of the £1,500 a year she was supposed to be in receipt of? As the end draws nearer and nearer, the picture grows more and more gloomy. She, who was once the very fountain of mirth and laughter, can now only lie all day long sighing upon a sofa, waiting in terrible anxiety for letters which never come. Each time the messenger returns from his fruitless journey to the post-office, and answers 'None' to the eager questioning look that waits him, her despair and agony grow greater, and are succeeded by a torpor resembling death. From whom those letters were expected, or what was the nature of the news so ardently desired, none knew. We may guess, however, they should have been from the Duke, containing the fulfilment of his promises, and that she fell into despair upon finding herself so cruelly abandoned. Over the last scene

\* Barton of the Mint assured Taylor she had £2,500 at her disposal whenever she chose to demand it. It is evident she never did demand it. Why? This is a mystery.

of all there rests a strange mystery, which has never been satisfactorily cleared up.

Towards the latter end of June, 1816, Mrs. Jordan's companion wrote to one of that lady's daughters, informing her that her mother had died, after a few days' illness, at St. Cloud. At the same time her death was announced in the morning journals. Three days afterwards a second letter was received from the same writer, saying that she had been deceived by Mrs. Jordan's appearance, and that she was still alive, but very ill. While the daughter was preparing to go to her, there came a third letter announcing that Mrs. Jordan was really dead. General Hawkins at once made a journey to Paris, but when he arrived she had been buried three days. When Sir Jonah Barrington went to St. Cloud to gather the particulars of his poor friend's death, the landlord of the house in which she died gave him a most minute description of the sad event : how, upon his returning from the post-office with the old report of 'No letters,' she had fallen back, and almost instantly expired. *Yet he made no mention of the resuscitation.* This total forgetfulness of so extraordinary an event, if it ever took place, is, to say the least, remarkable. In consequence of these discrepancies a report got abroad that she was not really dead. Boader himself was strongly impressed with this belief, from a circumstance which I will relate in his own words : 'The dear lady was not an every-day sort of woman. She was near-sighted, and wore a glass attached to a gold chain about her neck ; her manner of using this to assist her sight was extremely peculiar. I was taking a very usual walk before dinner, and I stopped at a bookseller's window on the left side of Piccadilly, to look at some new publication that struck my eye. On a sudden a lady stood by my side who had stopped with a similar impulse ; to my conviction it was Mrs. Jordan. As she did not speak, but dropped a long white veil immediately over her face, I concluded that she did not wish to be recognised, and therefore, however [

should have wished an explanation of what surprised me, I yielded to her pleasure upon the occasion.' About the same time, and without any knowledge of the above circumstance, her daughter, Mrs. Alsop, believed that she saw her mother in the Strand ; so terrible was the shock to her that she fell down in a fit, and could never be convinced to her dying day that she had been deceived.

The Duke ever cherished her memory with a profound respect. While giving a private performance at Bushey, Mathews was struck by an admirable portrait of Mrs. Jordan. 'I know you have a fine collection of theatrical portraits,' said the Duke, observing his glance, 'but I hope you have not one like that—I mean so good a one—I should not like anybody to have so good a one.' Mathews replied that he was not so fortunate as to possess one so excellent as that. The Duke then gazed upon the picture, saying, with emotion and strong emphasis, 'She was one of the best of women, Mr. Mathews.' The manner in which the words were spoken was so affecting that it drew tears from the auditor. The Duke perceiving it, kindly pressed his hand, and added, 'You knew her, Mathews, therefore you must have known her excellence.' He then placed a small case in his hand, and said, 'Mathews, I am not rich enough to remunerate such talent as yours, or make a suitable return for your kind exertions last night, which delighted us all ; but I hope you will gratify me by the acceptance of this little purse' (a £50 note) 'for the purpose of purchasing some small addition to your collection of paintings, in remembrance of me and of the original of the portrait.' There is little doubt that he had good cause for such feelings. When he became King he elevated her eldest son to the Peerage as Earl of Munster, and gave precedence to her other sons and daughters.

A famous name in the theatrical annals of this period is MISS FARREN. Yet, notwithstanding its brilliant and somewhat romantic climax, there is very little that is interesting to be told about her professional career. Her father began life

as an apothecary in Cork, but threw up his business to join a strolling company. After wandering and starving for some time in Ireland, he went over to Liverpool, and there married an innkeeper's daughter. The young couple now strolled together, and brought their children up to the same profession. The father died some ten or twelve years after his marriage, leaving behind two daughters, of whom the future peeress was the younger. The elder thereafter attained some celebrity as Mrs. Knight. Both seem to have performed from their earliest years, with their mother, in the miserable strolling companies which perambulated Ireland at this time. Elizabeth's first appearance in a regular theatre was at Liverpool in 1773, as Rosetta in 'Love in a Village,' she being then scarcely fifteen years of age. The following year she was engaged at Birmingham, where, it is said, she eked out her small salary by carrying the other actresses' dresses to and from the theatre. It was Mr. Younger, the Liverpool manager, who recommended her to Colman, and she opened at the Haymarket as Miss Hardcastle, in 1777, with considerable success. The next winter she played tragedy parts at Covent Garden, but made little progress. Upon the retirement of Mrs. Abington she went over to Drury Lane, and in Lady Townley and Lady Teazle was at once hailed as the successor of that great actress. But, although most admirable in the fine ladies of comedy, she never equalled Mrs. Abington. She was thin, above the middle height, with an expressive face and a clear voice. She is said to have been gifted with the grace of delicacy above all comedy actresses, and that even in delivering the dialogue of Congreve, though her eye sparkled with intelligence, she was always chaste. She had a host of noble lovers sighing at her feet, but they all sighed in vain; even the Earl of Derby, until he could make her his Countess. It is related how he was frequently seen following her home from Drury Lane to Grosvenor Square, she scarcely vouchsafing a smile, or a look even, to his eager speeches. This

courtship continued for eighteen years, until the death of the first Lady Derby, from whom the Earl had long been separated. Miss Farren took leave of the stage in 1797, one month before her marriage. The younger Colman used to tell a story, how her mother, when Miss Farren was first at the Haymarket, was in the habit, during long rehearsals, of bringing her hot dinners, with gravy and vegetables, and yet he could never detect her carrying any plates and dishes into the theatre. At last he discovered the secret. She brought the food in *her pocket, which was lined with tin for the purpose.*

LOUISA BRUNTON was an actress more beautiful than talented. Her father was a provincial manager, and she made her first bow to a London audience, as Juliet, in 1785. Her style was as refined as her person was charming, but Boaden describes her as ‘a mere declaimer of passion.’ She retired from the stage to become Countess of Craven.

MISS MELLON, without possessing any striking abilities, seems to have been a very charming actress. Leigh Hunt praises her chiefly for her ‘chambermaids.’ ‘She catches with wonderful discrimination their probable touches of character and manner.’ In other parts he complains that she had ‘a vulgar shortness of speech.’ While she was with a strolling company at Stafford, Sheridan happened to be on a visit to a banker in the town ; the daughters of this gentleman took a great interest in the young actress, whose private character was most estimable, and persuaded him to go and see her act. He discovered such promise in her performance that he engaged her for Drury Lane, where she appeared as Lydia Languish in 1797. Her first acquaintance with Mr. Coutts began with his sending her five guineas for a benefit ticket. Those coins she never parted with, keeping them as a memento. In 1815 she became his wife, and retired from the stage. After his death she married the Duke of St. Albans. But the vast fortune left her by her first husband she bequeathed to the daughter of Sir Francis Burdett,

who by her munificence to the theatrical profession has ever shown herself mindful of the source whence she derived it.

With MRS. POWELL, MRS. MATTOCKS, and MRS. ESTEN we may close the Kemble period. The former acted from 1788 to 1816. MRS. MATTOCKS is a well-known name; she made her first appearance in 1752, when quite a child, as Miss Hallam, and did not retire until after a service of fifty-six years, in 1808. Beautiful MRS. ESTEN made some stir between the years 1790 and 1794. There are many other names well worthy of note did space permit their mention.

## PART IV.

### *THE KEAN AND MACREADY PERIOD.*



#### CHAPTER I.

EDMUND KEAN.

His doubtful parentage—Miss Tidswell—His first appearance on any stage—His erratic habits—First meeting with Charles Young—Rescued from vagabondage—A cabin boy—A swim across the Thames—Mrs. Siddons' prediction—A great man for once—Mary Chambers—Married—A terrible journey—Sheridan Knowles's first play—Miserable wanderings—Provincial criticisms—In despair—A rent in the cloud—Engaged for Drury Lane—New difficulties—‘Shylock or nothing’—Discouragement and contumely—A fatal prophecy—The dark hour before the dawn—A delicious triumph—Richard—Hamlet—Othello—Iago—Fame and fortune—Paying off an old insult—Romeo—Zanga—Sir Giles Overreach—Bertram—Love of low company—An episode—Contest with Booth—Lear—A profound student—First visit to America—Contest with Young—Professional jealousy—Mrs. Cox—A death-blow—Second visit to America—The Boston riot—Reappearance in London—His son Charles's first appearance—The wreck of genius—William Beverly—Last moments—Death—Burial—Doran on his acting.

DOUBT rests equally on the birth and parentage of Edmund Kean. Uncertainty about the father is by no means an uncommon circumstance, but it is more rare concerning the mother. Miss Tidswell, an actress, has sometimes been accredited with bringing him into the world, and even Kean himself seems to have entertained this belief—‘for why,’ says he, ‘did she take so much trouble over me?’—while to no

less a personage than to a Duke of Norfolk has been given the honour of his paternity. One day in the lobby of Drury Lane Theatre, Lord Essex openly accused his Grace of the fact, and asked him why he did not acknowledge his son. The Duke protested his friend was mistaken, and added that if it were so he should be proud to own him. Edmund's reputed mother, however, was a strolling actress, named Nance Carey. Her father was a strolling player; her grandfather, Henry Carey, dramatist and song-writer, and author of the sweet old lyric, 'Sally in our Alley,' was the natural son of the great Lord Halifax. Edmund's reputed father was one Kean, who is variously represented as a tailor and a builder. Some say the child was born in Castle Street, Leicester Square, others in a miserable garret in Ewer Street, Southwark; and 1787-88-89 have been variously assigned as the date of that event. We hear nothing about the father; whoever he might have been, he seems to have taken no heed of his son from the time the latter came into the world. Neither was the mother more natural in her conduct; she abandoned him to the care of Miss Tidswell, who seems to have been the only person who attended on her in her miserable confinement.

'Before the piece ("Cymon") was brought out,' writes Michael Kelly, 'I had a number of children brought to me, that I might choose a Cupid. One struck me, with a fine pair of black eyes, who seemed, by his looks and little gestures, most anxious to be chosen as the representative of the God of Love. I chose him, and little did I then imagine that my little Cupid would eventually become a great actor: the then little urchin was neither more nor less than Edmund Kean.' The boy was at that time three years of age. He was one of the imps that danced around the cauldron in John Kemble's revival of 'Macbeth'; one night he mischievously invited his companions to play some freak, not in their parts, and then tumbled them over 'like a pack of cards,' for which he was well thumped by John Philip.

During this time Miss Tidswell was sending him to a school in Orange Court ; he was a weakly child, with bent legs and grown-out ankles which necessitated the use of irons until he was seven years old. His uncle, Moses Kean, who gave entertainments at the Lyceum Theatre and other places, took some notice of the boy, instructed him in Shakespeare, had him taught dancing by D'Egville, the ballet-master, and fencing by Angelo. At a very youthful age he was a match with the foils for almost anyone who entered the school, and was all his life renowned for his mastery of that accomplishment. But he was a born Bohemian, and would leave his home, for weeks together, to wander about the country with acrobats and tramps ; once he was found in a low public-house in St. George's Fields, tarred and feathered, giving songs and recitations. Moses Kean dying, Miss Tidswell again took charge of him, and procured him an engagement for children's parts at Drury Lane, where he played Arthur to Mrs. Siddons' Lady Constance. One night Mrs. Charles Kemble hearing a noise in the green-room, was told that it was little Carey reciting Richard the Third after the manner of Garrick ; 'Go and see him, he is really very clever.' Long before he had arrived at his teens he gave imitations of Bannister and other famous actors. Miss Tidswell took great pains with her rebellious pupil, made him study and rehearse all the great parts of Shakespeare under her supervision. When Miss Tidswell chastised him for his delinquencies he would run away from her as he had from his uncle, for which she would tie him up all day to a bed-post. Once she dragged him home by a rope through the streets ; at another time she bound a brass collar round his neck, as though he had been a dog of erratic habits ; upon the collar was inscribed, 'Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.'

By-and-by his mother, discovering that he might be of use to her, suddenly put in an appearance and a maternal claim, and took him away from his protectress. A more disreputable vagabond than Nance Carey it would be difficult

to conceive ; when strolling failed she tramped the country with perfumes and face powders, and similar commodities. Edmund carried the merchandise, and when the opportunity presented itself recited scenes and speeches from plays at taverns and farms, and sometimes at gentlemen's houses. Among Miss Carey's customers was Mr. Young, a surgeon, the father of the future great tragedian. And it is related in the life of the latter how once, after a dinner-party in that gentleman's house, the young vagrant was had in to recite, while his mother waited in the hall, and how beside his father's chair stood a handsome boy of ten, named Charles. And so, strangely, at the beginning of their lives, met the two men who were thereafter to be rivals on the London stage. Mr. Young recommended Nance's wares to a Mrs. Clarke, of Guildford Street. Wherever she went she talked about the talents of her son, which brought her in far more money than her perfume bottles and pomatum, and her crafty eulogies soon excited a curiosity in Mrs. Clarke to see this prodigy. His first introduction to this lady is thus graphically described by Proctor in his '*Life of Kean*' :

"The door was thrown open, and a pale, slim boy of about ten years old entered, very poorly clad, ragged, with dirty hands, face washed, delicate skin, brilliant eyes, superb head of curled and matted hair, and a piece of hat in his hand. With the bow and air of a prince, he delivers his message : "My mother, madam, sends her duty, and begs you will be so good as to lend her a shilling to take her spangled, tiffany petticoat out of pawn, as she wants it to appear in at Richmond to-morrow." "Are you the little boy who can act so well?" inquired the lady. A bow of assent and a kindling cheek were the sole reply. "What can you act?" "Richard the Third, Speed the Plough, Hamlet, and Harlequin," was the quick answer. "I should like to see you act." "I should be proud to act to you." And so it was arranged that he should give her a specimen of his powers that evening. Several friends were invited to

witness the performance. At a little after six, there came—‘The same thundering rap which had preceded his advent in the morning. His face was now clean, the delicacy of his complexion was more obvious than before, and his beautiful hair had been combed, and shone like a raven’s wing. His dress had indeed suffered no improvement, but a frilled handkerchief of his mother’s was stuck inside his jacket, and was more than a substitute for a shirt collar.’ The lady takes him away to her dressing-room to make some improvement in his costume, puts on him a black riding-hat and feathers, which she turns up at one side with pins; a sword and belt are also found and buckled round his waist. These appendages to his everyday rags certainly give the boy a somewhat comical appearance, and would excite the risibility of the guests, but for the intense earnestness with which he dashes to the further end of the room, which has been fixed upon for the stage, and where there are curtains and a door for exit, and before the people have time to laugh begins his recitation. ‘It was no small task that lay before him,’ continues his biographer, ‘to face the smiles of an audience sceptical to his talents, and to conquer them. Yet he did this, nay, more; for the expression in the countenances of his audience changed from contempt or distrust into attention, from attention to admiration--to silent wonder—to tears.’ A shower of sixpences and shillings rewarded his efforts, but he refused to pick them up, and they were with difficulty forced upon him. Such was the boy’s pride when free from the baneful influence of his vagabond mother.

This acting led to important consequences. Mrs. Clarke, struck by his talents and pitying his condition, prevailed upon her husband to allow her to take him under her protection. She placed him at school, had him taught riding, fencing, dancing, and treated him as though he had been her own child, and he in return continued to delight her and her friends by his recitations. This lasted nearly two years. One day a man

and woman and their daughters came on a visit to Guildford Street ; it was arranged they were all to go to the theatre that night, and young Kean was to accompany them. ‘What, does *he* sit in the box with us?’ exclaimed the snob. They were at dinner when these words were spoken ; the boy, crimson with mortification, dashed down his knife and fork, rose from the table, left the room and the house, resolving never again to enter it. He walked to Bristol, with the intention, it would seem, of getting on board ship as cabin-boy, but failing in the attempt, trudged back to London, supporting himself on the way by reciting at public-houses. One morning he was found by a man who knew him, ragged and footsore, upon a dung-heap in a mews in the neighbourhood of his former home, and who took him back. But such behaviour could scarcely be pardoned ; after giving him some money collected at a farewell performance, she got up as a sort of benefit, the lady dismissed her *protégé*, of whom she was weary, and in whom was so strangely combined the pride of an aristocrat and the tastes of a gipsy. After this we find him back with his mother, a member of the company of Richardson’s Show. His acting at Windsor Fair excited so much attention that King George sent for him to the Castle ; and his Majesty was so highly pleased with his talents that he made him a present of two guineas. When in London he recited at various places of amusement. A lady speaking to him one day, when he was the all-famous actor, of certain entertainments that used to be given in Leicester Place, remarked : ‘I used to be very much pleased with a person who spoke poetry at the Sans Souci.’ ‘Do you wish to know who it was that spouted poetry?’ said Kean, turning head over heels in the drawing-room in Clarges Street. ‘Know, then, ’twas I !’ During one period of his boyhood Kean went to sea as a cabin-boy. A recent biographer, Mr. Hawkins, says he was only eight years old when this escapade took place, but it seems highly improbable that any captain would have taken such a mere

child, small and weakly too as he was for his age. Proctor makes him about eleven or twelve at the time. Be this as it may, he grew sick of his new calling long before the voyage to Madeira was completed; pretended to be deaf, then to lose the use of his limbs, and counterfeited so well as to deceive everybody, the doctors at Madeira included. On the homeward passage the ship was overtaken by a terrible storm, but not even that could frighten him out of the deception. Upon being carried on shore at Portsmouth, he suddenly slipped out of the hands of the men who were bearing him to the hospital, did a few steps of the college hornpipe—and fled.

In 1804 Jerrold informs us that Kean joined his father's company at Sheerness; he still dressed as a boy, and still retained his mother's name of Carey. He opened in 'George Barnwell and Harlequin,' played the whole round of tragedy, comedy, opera, farce, pantomime; sang comic songs; and all for 15s. a week! Not being of provident habits, and already giving way to dissipation, such a stipend left little for times of enforced idleness. The want of the smallest coin frequently put him to terrible shifts. Once being at Rochester without a penny to pay the ferry toll, he, with his whole wardrobe tied up in a pocket-handkerchief and slung round his neck, swam across the river. A few years afterwards, while proceeding to an engagement at Braintree in Essex, he found himself on the Kentish shore in the same impecunious condition. There was nothing for it but to swim across the Thames, which he accordingly did. He was to open that night in 'Rolla.' All wet as he was, he set forward towards his destination, and arrived just in time to dress, but without being able to procure any refreshment; exhausted nature gave way, and he fainted in the middle of a scene. A fever and an ague were the results of that day's work. In 1806 Miss Tidswell procured him an engagement at the Haymarket to play small parts—they were very small indeed—servants, alguazils, or messengers. Yet he worked

hard to make the most of them. ‘Look at that little man,’ sneered an actor one night, ‘he is trying to make a part out of nothing!’ But his restless ambition could not remain content in so subordinate a position, and the next year we find him at Belfast, where for the first time he had the honour of playing with Mrs. Siddons. His first part with her was Osmyn, in ‘Zara;’ he was grossly imperfect, and intoxicated as well, and excited the great lady’s supreme disgust. But the next night he more than redeemed himself, at least as an actor, by his performance of Young Norval. The star pronounced that he played ‘well, *very* well; but,’ she added, with a lofty look, ‘it’s a pity there’s too little of you to do anything.’ She little thought he was one day destined to snatch the sceptre from the Kemble grasp. Next we find him at Tunbridge Wells at 18s. a week, taking a benefit and insisting upon the printer setting his name in the largest type in the office, with, ‘I will be a great man for once.’ Alas, the big type brought only £5 into the house. After that, he returned to Sheerness to play every thing, for £1 1s. a week, which, however, was an advance of 6s. upon his former stipend. One night while he was performing Alexander the Great, in Lee’s tragedy, some officers in the stage-box annoyed him by laughing and calling out ‘Alexander the Little.’ At length, unable to endure their sneers any longer, he advanced with folded arms and a look that appalled the sneerers, close to the box and said, ‘Yes, but with a *great soul!*’ Jerrold, writing of his versatility and ingenuity, says, ‘All the models for the tricks of the pantomime of “Mother Goose,” as played at Sheerness, were made by him out of matches, pins, and paper.’

His next engagement was at Gloucester, where he met his future wife, Mary Chambers, a Waterford girl, who had been a governess, and had then just entered the theatrical profession. Their first introduction did not at all promise such a result as matrimony. ‘Who is that shabby little man?’

she inquired of the manager, as he stood at the wings. The piece they first played in together was 'Laugh When You Can.' Kean was very imperfect, and when they came off the stage, Miss Chambers, very angry and almost crying, reproached him with, 'It is very shameful, sir, that you should not know a word of your part.' Kean made no reply, but went to the manager and asked, 'Who the devil is that?' Master Betty, the 'Young Roscius,' came to Gloucester to 'star,' and Kean was cast Laertes to his Hamlet. On the day of the performance he disappeared; for three days and three nights no tidings could be heard of him; men were sent out in all directions to seek him, and he was found at last returning to the town. He went at once to the lodgings of Miss Chambers, to whom he was now engaged. 'Where *have* you been, Mr. Kean?' was her anxious query. 'In the fields, in the woods. I am starved, I have eaten nothing but turnips and cabbages since I have been out. But I'll go again to-morrow, and again and again, and as often as I see myself put in for such a character. I'll play seconds to no man, save John Kemble.'

He and Miss Chambers, who was eight years his senior, were united in 1808, for which act Mr. Beverley, the father of the celebrated artist, discharged them from his company, on the plea that they had thereby forfeited what little attraction they might have possessed. But they soon afterwards obtained an engagement at Birmingham at £1 1s. each per week; this was afterwards increased by 10s., in consideration of his undertaking harlequin. No contrast can be more striking than that between the past and present of theatrical salaries both in town and country; a leading actor in such a theatre as Birmingham would now command at least £6 a week. He never remained long in one engagement; his proud impetuous temper, which could endure neither reproof nor humiliation, together with his irregular habits, brought about continual disagreements with his managers, and consequent dismissal. Hence the miseries he endured; for

even in those days of pitiful salaries the country actor if provident could contrive to live in respectability ; but Kean suffered under a chronic destitution.

Birmingham did not long contain this erratic spirit ; his next destination was Swansea. But before he could leave the former town he was compelled to borrow £2 of his new manager to clear his liabilities, and then walk the journey with a wife within a few weeks of her confinement. Proctor gives a sad but striking picture of this journey. ‘Kean, dressed in blue from head to foot, with his dark, sharp, resolute face, a black stock, and four swords over his shoulder suspending the family bundle of clothes, looked like a poor little navy lieutenant whom the wars had left on half-pay and penniless, trudging on with his wife to his native village.’ They had started with only a few shillings, and upon arriving at Bristol found themselves penniless and obliged to write to Swansea for another loan, which, when it came, was nearly all swallowed up by the expenses they had incurred while waiting for it. They obtained a passage to Newport in a barge laden with hemp and tar, and thence proceeded to their destination on foot. Sometimes they encountered good Samaritans who would not take their money for the frugal meal they ordered ; at others, brutes who refused a drink of milk to the poor footsore woman, who scarcely knew what hour she might not be seized with the pangs of maternity.

Not long enough, however, for the child to be born, did they remain at Swansea ; that event took place at Waterford, in September, 1809. The baby was christened Charles. At Waterford Kean met the celebrated dramatist, Sheridan Knowles, then an obscure actor like himself ; and for Kean, was written his first play, ‘*Leo the Gipsy*,’ in which he made a great success. It was never published, and the manuscript was lost. Grattan describes his benefit performance in this town : ‘The play was Hannah More’s tragedy of “*Percy*,” in which he, of course, played the hero. Elwina was played by Mrs. Kean, who was applauded to her heart’s content.

After the tragedy, Kean gave a specimen of tight-rope dancing, and another of sparring with a professional pugilist. He then played the leading part in a musical interlude, and finished with Chimpanzee, the monkey, in the melodramatic pantomime of "La Pérouse," and in this character he showed agility scarcely since surpassed by Mazurier and Gouffé, and touches of deep tragedy in the monkey's death scene, which made the audience shed tears.' By this benefit he realised £40. But soon afterwards we find him penniless at Dumfries, hiring a room at a public-house for an entertainment, where a single sixpence only is paid for admission. From Dumfries he and his wife and children trudge on to Carlisle ; the Assizes are on, and he writes a letter to the barristers, proposing to recite and sing to them and leave the reward to their own generosity. But they will none of him. So the landlord of the tavern he is staying at gives him the use of the room, and he sends out the bellman to announce his entertainment. He has better luck than at the Scotch town, for he takes enough money to discharge his bill and carry him to York.

At York he arrived utterly destitute. So extreme was his need that he presented himself for enlistment as a common soldier, but an officer attached to the regiment good-naturedly dissuaded him from his project. More than once his poor wife had knelt down by the bedside of her half-famished children, and prayed that they and herself might be at once released from their sufferings by death. The wife of a dancing-master, Mrs. Nokes, hearing of their distress, visited them in the miserable public-house where they had taken shelter, and upon going away put something in Mrs. Kean's hand, which proved to be a five-pound note. She also prevailed upon her husband to lend him the room in which he gave his lessons, for an entertainment. This entertainment consisted of scenes from plays, songs, and imitations of London actors. Nine pounds were the receipts, and with this the poor strollers started for London.

The journey was done partly on foot, partly in waggons, Kean carrying the eldest boy much of the way. Soon after arriving in town he was engaged by Hughes of Sadler's Wells, who also had the Exeter Theatre, to go down to the old western city to 'play everything,' for £2 a week, the largest salary he had ever received. He and Hughes had acted together in Gloucester, where they announced a joint benefit; but the entire receipts of the house amounting only to 1s. 6d., they went hand-in-hand before the curtain and thanked and dismissed their patrons. Before leaving London, he went to see Kemble in *Wolsey*. When he returned home he began to imitate him. 'Shall I ever walk those boards?' he exclaimed. '*I will*, and make a hit.'

The good people of Exeter appreciated his harlequin more than his tragic heroes. His conduct there seems to have been very irregular. Once he absented himself from home for three days. To the question of where had he been, he replied grandiloquently, 'I have been doing a noble action; I have been drinking these three days with a brother actor, who is leaving Exeter, to keep up his spirits!' From Exeter he proceeded to Guernsey, and thus a sapient critic of the place noticed his *début*:

'Last night a young man, whose name, the bills said, was Kean, made his first appearance as *Hamlet*, and truly his performance of the character made us wish that we had been indulged with the country system of excluding it and playing all the other characters. This person has, we understand, a high character in several parts of England, and his vanity has repeatedly prompted him to endeavour to procure an engagement in one of the theatres in the Metropolis; the difficulties he has met with have, however, proved insurmountable, and the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden have saved themselves the disgrace, to which they would be subject by countenancing such impudence and incompetency. Even his performance of the inferior characters of the drama would be objectionable, if there was nothing to render him ridiculous by one of the vilest figures that has been seen either on or off the stage; and if his mind was half so qualified for the representation of *Richard the Third*, which he is shortly to appear in, as his person is suited to the deformities with which the tyrant is supposed to have been distinguished from his fellows, his success would be most unequivocal.'

As to his Hamlet, it is one of the most terrible misrepresentations to which Shakespeare has ever been subjected. Without grace or dignity he comes forward ; he shows an unconsciousness that anyone is before him ; and is often so forgetful of the respect due to an audience, that he turns his back upon them in some of those scenes in which contemplation is to be indulged, as if for the purpose of showing his abstraction from all ordinary subjects. His voice is harsh and monotonous, but, as it is deep, answers well enough the idea that he entertains of impressing terror by a tone which seems to proceed from a charnel-house.'

The effect of this ungenerous criticism upon the unruly and ignorant rabble which usually graced the interior of the Guernsey theatre may be readily conceived. 'Too courageous,' says Mr. Hawkins, 'to bow before the inevitable tempest, Kean made his appearance in "Richard the Third." Shouts of derisive laughter, followed by a storm of sibilation, broke from all parts of the house as he came on the stage. For a time his patience was proof against an opposition which he hoped to subdue by the merits of his acting, but, as no sign of abatement appeared, he boldly advanced to the front, and, with an eye that seemed to emit bright and deadly flashes, applied to them with tremendous emphasis the words of his part : "Unmannered dogs, stand ye when I command." For a moment the audience were taken aback by this unexpected resistance; all became as noiseless as the gathering storm before the tempest, and the clamour only revived when a stalwart fellow, in his shirt-sleeves, yelled out from the back of the pit a demand for an "apology." "Apology!" cried the little man, and his form dilated with excitement; "take it from this remark—the only proof of intelligence you have yet given is in the proper application of the words I have just uttered." The uproar which succeeded this retort rendered the interference of the manager imperative. Kean was hurried off the stage, and the part given to an outsider immeasurably less talented than his predecessor, but who stood high in favour with the discerning and enlightened audience in front.' The Governor espoused his cause, however, and assisted in getting him up

a house to an entertainment, in which his boy Howard, still a mere child, appeared. From Guernsey he passed over to Torbay, to Brixham, and issued his usual bill ; but this was worse than Dumfries, for here not a soul came. Then he returned to Exeter, but his conduct had been so bad during his previous sojourn there that all his old friends turned their backs upon him. He obtained for his benefit, however, the patronage of a gentleman of some influence, named Buller ; yet because the butler happened to say in his presence, ‘ You will be sure to have a good house, as my master patronises the play,’ Kean’s pride took fire, he vowed he would not sell a single ticket. ‘ If the people won’t come and see my acting,’ he said, ‘ it shan’t be said they come by Mr. Buller’s desire.’ At this time Fortune seemed to close every door against him ; he wrote to Dublin and to Edinburgh, but received no answers ; he wrote to Kemble, offering to engage with him for a third-rate line of business, and received no reply ; he then opened an academy to teach dancing and fencing, but no pupils came.

At this time there happened what seemed to be a stroke of luck, but which afterwards proved a disaster that at one time threatened to mar his fortunes. He had been in correspondence with Elliston concerning an engagement at the new theatre in Wych Street, Drury Lane, and at length closed with his offer of £3 a week ; but he could not get him to fix any definite time for opening. By-and-by Elliston seemed inclined to depart from the stipulations of the agreement, and so the affair remained uncertain. In the meantime, while Kean was at Teignmouth, Doctor Drury, head-master of Harrow, had seen him act on his benefit night. When Mrs. Drury came the next day to pay for her box she expressed the great gratification that both herself and her husband had experienced at the performance, and, better still, that as the Doctor was going to dine on the following day in company with Mr. Pascoe Greenfell, one of the committee of Drury Lane, he would recommend him for an engagement at that

theatre. The Doctor kept his word, and in due time arrived a letter requesting Kean to come up to London immediately. As usual, he had no funds; all depended upon his benefit, and to obtain that he must play out his engagement. And so he had to journey from Teignmouth to Barnstaple, thence to Weymouth and Dorchester, suffering all the tortures of hope deferred. At Weymouth he was requested for the third time to play second to Master Betty, and for the third time he ran away. He was absent for a couple of days. When the '*Young Roscius*' had departed, Kean was found in front of the theatre stalking up and down in tragic fury, his hands in his pockets, cursing managers, plays, and fortune. After some persuasion he was enticed home, where he burst into a passion of tears. '*I must feel deeply; he commands overflowing houses, I play to empty benches, and I know my powers are superior to his,*' he exclaimed.

One night, in the autumn of the year 1813, while performing in Dorchester: '*The curtain drew up,*' to quote the actor's own words, '*I saw a wretched house: a few people in the pit and gallery, and three persons in the boxes showed the quality of the attraction we possessed.* In the stage box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting—he was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best.' (His part was Octavian in Colman's '*Mountaineers*.') '*The strange man did not applaud, but his looks told me he was pleased.* After the play I went to my dressing-room to change my dress for the Savage (a pantomime character), so that I could hear every word that was said overhead. I heard the gentleman ask Lee, the manager, the name of the performer who played Octavian. '*Oh,*' replied Lee, '*his name is Kean; a wonderful clever fellow.*' '*He is certainly very clever, but he is very small,*' said the gentleman. '*His mind is large, no matter for his height,*' answered Lee. By this time I was dressed; I therefore mounted to the stage. The gentleman

bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my playing. "Well," he said, "will you breakfast with me to-morrow ; I shall be glad to have some conversation with you. My name is Arnold ; I AM THE MANAGER OF DRURY LANE THEATRE." I staggered as if I had been shot.' As soon as the performance was over, and he could tear off his dress, he rushed home. Agitation would scarcely allow him to speak. 'My fortune's made, my fortune's made !' he gasped at last ; then told the good news. But as he finished, his eyes fell upon his poor sickly first-born, then very ill. 'Let but Howard live, and we shall be happy yet,' he exclaimed hopefully. Alas ! the proceeds of his benefit in that very town had to be devoted to the poor boy's burial. The result of the appointment with Arnold was a three-years' engagement at Drury Lane, at eight, nine, and ten pounds per week. A few days afterwards Howard died. 'The joy I felt,' he wrote to Arnold, 'three days since at the flattering prospects of future prosperity is now obliterated by the unexpected loss of my child.'

At last, on the 6th of November, he contrived to get to town. His salary was to commence at once ; but when he went to the treasury he encountered a sudden and unexpected rebuff. Elliston had put in his prior claim, and Arnold very angrily asserted that he had engaged himself under false pretences. Kean wrote a letter in which he related every point of his transactions with the manager of the Wych Street Theatre, and endeavoured to show that that gentleman had justly forfeited all claim to his services by having been the first to violate the terms of the agreement. I have not space to enter into the merits of the dispute ; Elliston had evidently acted very shiftily towards the poor unknown actor, taking advantage of his position, while Kean, upon the prospect of the better engagement opening to him, had done everything in his power to break with him. If it may be averred that neither party acted in strict honour, still there was every excuse to be made for a

man in Kean's situation. The new year came ; more than one actor had made his *dibut* at Drury Lane and failed. The tragedy portion of the company was less than mediocre, being represented by such conventional actors as Raymond, Pope, Johnstone, Henry Siddons, and Rae. The fortunes of the theatre were in a desperate condition, the expenses far exceeding the receipts, and inevitable bankruptcy was looming in the no distant future. At length the dispute between Elliston and Kean was adjusted, by the former taking an actor named Bernard as a substitute, the extra amount of his salary, two pounds a week, having to be paid by Kean. From the end of November to the end of the following January, Kean existed, heaven alone knows how, for the management of Drury Lane refused to pay him a shilling. In Miss Mellon's 'Memoirs,' it is asserted that she, having heard of his distress, secretly assisted him and assured his landlady of her rent. All that he had ever suffered could not have equalled the misery of those two months of oscillation between hope and despair, amidst hunger and wretchedness. At length Arnold, as a *pis aller*, made up his mind to give him a trial. But his troubles were not yet over. Now rose a dispute as to the opening part : Arnold wanted Richard, but Kean knew the disadvantage his small figure would be at when compared with that of the majestic Kemble, and answered, 'Shylock or nothing.' There was marvellous resoluteness in this determination, considering all he had passed through, which had been sufficient to crush the strongest spirit. But it succeeded, and the 26th of January, 1814, was decided upon for his appearance. One rehearsal only was vouchsafed him, and that was hurried and careless. The actors sneered at his figure, at his shabby coat with the capes made of rough grey cloth such as is used for soldiers' clothing ; Raymond, the stage manager, declared 'his business' would not do, and prophesied certain failure. One *lady* wondered where the little wretch had been picked up ! and advised him to return to

the country, as amongst such actors as surrounded him, he could stand no chance. He went home. ‘I must dine to-day,’ he said ; and for the first time for many days indulged in the luxury of meat. Then all that he had to do was to wait as patiently as he could for the night. ‘My God !’ he exclaimed, ‘if I succeed I shall go mad !

As the church clocks were striking six he sallied forth from his lodgings in Cecil Street. His parting words to his wife were, ‘I wish I was going to be shot !’ In his hand he carried a small bundle—containing shoes, stockings, wig, and other trifles of costume. The night was very cold and foggy ; there had been heavy snow, and a thaw had set in ; the streets were almost impassable for slush, which penetrated through his worn boots and chilled him to the bone. He darted quickly through the stage-door, wishing to escape all notice, and repaired to his dressing-room. There the feelings of the actors were shocked by another innovation ; he was actually going to play Shylock in a black wig instead of the traditional red one ! They smiled among themselves, shrugged their shoulders, but made no remark ; such a man was beyond remonstrance. Besides, what did it matter ? he would not be allowed to appear a second time. Jack Bannister and Oxberry alone offered him a friendly word. When the curtain rose the house was miserably bad, but by-and-by the overflow of Covent Garden, which was doing well at the time, began to drop in and make up a tolerable audience. His reception was encouraging. At his first words, ‘Three thousand ducats, well ?’ Dr. Drury, who was in front, pronounced him ‘safe.’ At ‘I *will*, be assured I may,’ there was a burst of applause, and at the great speech ending with ‘And for these courtesies I’ll lend you thus much monies,’ the sounds of approbation were very strong. Even as the curtain fell upon the first act success was almost ensured, and already the actors who had treated him so superciliously began to gather round with congratulations. But he shrank from them and wandered about in the darkness at the back

of the stage. The promise of the first act was well-sustained in the second. But his great triumph was reserved for the scene with Salanio and Salarino in the third, where he is told of the flight of his daughter Jessica with a Christian ; there so terrible was his energy, so magnificent his acting, that a whirlwind of applause shook the house. Then came the trial scene, grander still in its complex emotions and its larger scope for great powers : and all was so novel, so strange, so opposed to old traditions. When the curtain finally fell upon the wild enthusiasm of the audience, Raymond, who had snubbed him, offered him oranges ; Arnold, who had bullied him and ‘young man’d’ him, brought him negus. Drunk with delight he rushed home, and with half-frenzied incoherency poured forth the story of his triumph. ‘Mary,’ he cried, ‘you shall ride in your carriage yet ! Charles,’ lifting the child from his bed, ‘shall go to Eton.’ Then his voice faltered, and he murmured, ‘If Howard had but lived to see it.’ The ‘Merchant of Venice’ was played several nights in succession, and the nightly receipts rose from £100 to £600.

His next part was Richard—the *second* part is always the touchstone of an actor’s success : he here entered the lists with Cooke and Kemble, and memories of Garrick’s splendid performance had not yet died out among old playgoers. In Shylock his small stature mattered little, but in Richard that disadvantage would be glaringly perceptible ; he approached the part with fear and trembling. ‘I am so frightened,’ he said, before the curtain rose, ‘that my acting will be almost dumb-show to-night.’ But nevertheless from the first soliloquy to the appalling last scene he took both audience and critics by storm. The performance must have been wonderfully like Garrick’s. As a child we hear of him reciting the part ‘after the manner of Garrick,’ of which doubtless Miss Tidswell gave him the idea. Mrs. Garrick, who went to see him play, told Dibdin that Cooke put her in mind of her husband, but Kean was like Mr. Garrick him-

self. His chief fault was that his hypocrisy in the scene with Lady Anne was too thinly veiled. There was an exultant reckless scorn in his insinuative gallantry that could not have deceived the shallowest woman. But the tent scene was wonderful, and in the last, Hazlitt says, ‘he fought like one drunk with wounds ; and the attitude in which he stands with his hands stretched out, after his sword is taken from him, had a preternatural and terrific grandeur, as if his will could not be disarmed, and the very phantoms of his despair had a withering power.’ Cooke was said to have been far surpassed. But Macready makes a very clever distinction between the performance of the two actors. He says that ‘there was a solidity of deportment and manner, and at the same time a sort of unctuous enjoyment of his successful craft, in the soliloquising stage villainy of Cooke, which gave powerful and rich effect to the sneers and retorts of Cibber’s hero, and certain points traditional from Garrick were made with consummate skill, significance, and power. Kean’s conception was decidedly more Shakespearian. He hurried you along in his impetuous course, with a spirit that brooked no delay. In inflexibility of will and sudden grasp of expedients he suggested the idea of a feudal Napoleon. His personation was throughout consistent, and he was only inferior to Cooke where he attempted points upon the same ground as his distinguished predecessor.’ Byron wrote in his Diary : ‘Just returned from seeing Kean in Richard. By Jove, he is a soul ! Life, nature, truth, without exaggeration or diminution.’ The terrible excitement of the first representation laid him up for a week. On the day of his second appearance in the part, the doors of the theatre were besieged soon after noon, and at night hundreds were unable to gain admittance.

His next character was Hamlet. It had always been his favourite, and he had studied it more deeply than any other. We can scarcely reconcile our ideas of Kean with that of the Prince of Denmark. Yet Hazlitt says he formed

a higher conception of his genius from that than even from his two previous delineations. It was full of beauties, more especially in the closet scene, and in that with Ophelia, in both of which his passion was tempered with a gentleness never seen before. His returning to press Ophelia's hand to his lips ere he left, was, says the great critic, 'the finest commentary that was ever made on Shakespeare.'

Othello and Iago, played alternately, were his next parts. 'In the tender scene of Othello,' says Dr. Doran, '(where love for Desdemona was above all other passion, even when for love he jealously slew her), he had as much power over his "bad voice," as his adversaries called it, as John Kemble over his asthmatic cough, and attuned it to the tenderness to which he had to give expression. In the fiercer scenes he was unsurpassable, and in the great third act none who remember him will, I think, be prepared to allow that he ever had, or is likely to have, an equal.' His farewell 'struck on the heart and imagination,' says Hazlitt, 'like the swelling of some divine music.' His Iago was quite original; he entirely discarded the old conventional villain of the stage, and played it lightly and naturally: at times it even lacked a necessary weightiness. 'The accomplished hypocrite,' to again quote Hazlitt, 'was, perhaps, never so finely, so adroitly portrayed—a gay, light-hearted monster—a careless, cordial, comfortable villain.' 'Was not Iago perfection,' writes Byron to Moore, 'particularly the last look? I was *close* to him (in the orchestra), and never saw an English countenance half so expressive.'

When the season closed, he had played Shylock fifteen times, Richard twenty-five, Hamlet eight, Othello ten, Iago eight, and Luke in 'Riches' (Massinger's 'City Madam' altered), four. Of those seventy nights the profits were £20,000. On one of the Othello nights the receipts amounted to over £673. Previously there had been one hundred and thirty-nine nights of continuous loss. Nor were the shareholders ungrateful to him. After his third

appearance Whitbread tore up the original agreement for £8 per week and gave him another for £20. After his first performance of Richard, Coutts, the banker, presented him with a hundred guineas and a gold watch. Similar gifts were made by noblemen, and four of the shareholders presented him with a share each. One week the Committee bestowed upon him £100, the next £500. Raymond, who had so contemptuously prophesied failure at his first rehearsal, was now always fawning upon him. But Kean could not forgive his former behaviour, at a time when a word of encouragement would have been so precious to him, and at length rid himself of this fulsome flatterer in a most summary and extraordinary fashion. One night, after Othello, he ordered a bowl of punch to be brought to his dressing-room, and sent for Raymond to partake of it. The stage-manager came all bows and smiles, as usual. Kean stopped him in the middle of an extravagant compliment : ‘Look you, sir, now I’m drawing money to your treasury, you find out I am a fine actor. You told me when I rehearsed Shylock it would be a failure. Then I was a poor man, without a friend, and you did your best to keep me down. Now you smother me with compliments ; ’tis right I should make some return ; there, sir, to the devil with your fine speeches—take that !’ and over the head and breast of the manager went the contents of the bowl. After which Kean stripped, and offered to give him satisfaction in a round at fisticuffs, which the other emphatically declined. Some of the actors sneered at his success, and called him ‘the fortunate actor.’ ‘I hear he is a very excellent harlequin,’ remarked one. ‘I am very sure he is, for he has jumped over all our heads,’ replied good-natured Jack Bannister. Dowton protested he could play Shylock better ; tried it some time afterwards, and did not repeat the experiment.

Upon the close of the Drury Lane season Kean went over to Dublin. In twelve nights he realised £1,370. He was invited to the table of Grattan, and by all the celebrities of

the Irish capital. He committed some extraordinary freaks under the influence of the national beverage ; was captured by watchmen : broke out of the watch-house, and played at hare-and-hounds through the streets in the early morning. From Dublin to Bristol and Birmingham, with equal success —and equal riot. From Birmingham he started for London at eight o'clock one morning, after a whole night spent in conviviality : mounted on the stage-coach box beside his servant ; his loaded pistols, *muzzles upwards*, tied to the button-holes of his coat.

Among his new characters, in the second season, the first was Macbeth ; but it never became one of his finest : the exquisite, poetical speeches of the last act were rendered ineffectively : the whole performance lacked repose, and was too much like his Richard. Romeo followed ; it was against his wish, for he disliked the part : never was anything more leaden or unloverlike than his balcony scene, but he somewhat redeemed himself in that with the Friar. In Penruddock he foolishly tilted against John Kemble in one of his grandest impersonations, and failed ; nor was he more fortunate in ‘Richard the Second,’ although Macready says his elocution was never more masterly than in the third act of that play. His great success this season was Zanga. Procter says that a gentleman, who was standing among the crowd in the pit-passage, unable to make his way further, hearing a tremendous shout of applause within, inquired if Zanga had not just previously cried, ‘Then lose her ?’ for that phrase uttered by Kean in the country used to make the walls shake ; and he was answered that it was so. Southey and a friend went to see him in this play. When Zanga, having consummated his vengeance, and uttering the words, ‘Know, then, ’twas I !’ raised his arms over the fainting Alonzo, his attitude and the expression of his features were so terrible, so appalling, that Southey exclaimed, ‘He looks like Michael Angelo’s rebellious arch-angel !’ ‘Like the arch-fiend, you mean,’ said the other.

Next came Sir Giles Overreach, the most wonderful of all his impersonations. During the last scene ladies were carried out of the boxes in screaming hysterics ; Lord Byron fell into a convulsive fit ; and, yet more wonderful instance of his marvellous power, a well-seasoned actress like Mrs. Glover, who played Lady Allworth, fainted away. ‘The last act of Mr. Kean’s performance of Sir Giles Overreach,’ says a writer in *Blackwood*, ‘is, without doubt, the most terrific exhibition of human passion that has been witnessed on the modern stage. When his plans are frustrated, and his plots laid open, all the restraints of society are thrown aside at once, and a torrent of hatred and revenge bursts from his breaking heart like water from a cleft rock, or like a raging and devouring fire, that, while it consumes the body and soul on which it feeds, darts forth its tongue of flame in all directions, threatening destruction to all within its reach. The whole of the last act exhibits a vehemence and rapidity, both of conception and execution, that perhaps cannot be surpassed.’ Of his rendering of one of the passages of the last act, Dr. Doran, in ‘Their Majesties’ Servants,’ has given us the following exquisite piece of word-painting : ‘In this last character all the qualities of Kean’s voice came out to wonderful purpose, especially in the scene where Lovel asks him :

‘ “Are you not moved with the sad imprecations  
And curses of whole families, made wretched  
By your sinister practices ?”

‘ To which Sir Giles replies :

‘ “Yes ! as rocks are,  
When foamy billows split themselves against  
Their flinty ribs ; or as the moon is mov’d  
When wolves, with hunger pin’d, howl at her brightness.”

I seem still to hear the words and the voice as I pen this passage ; now composed, now grand as the foamy billows ; so flute-like on the word ‘moon,’ creating a scene with the sound, and anon sharp, harsh, fierce in the last

line, with a look upward from those matchless eyes that rendered the troop visible, and their howl perceptible to the ear ; the whole serenity of the man, and the solidity of his temper, being less illustrated by the assurance in the succeeding words than by the exquisite music in the tone with which he uttered the word "brightness." Kemble attempted this part after him and failed ignominiously. Maturin's 'Bertram,' a gloomy but powerful play, and Sir Edward Mortimer, in 'The Iron Chest,' may be added to his list of successes. In the former part, one of his finest points was his 'God bless the child,' addressed to Imogen's infant, delivered with all the intense feeling he had so often expressed when looking upon his own sleeping child after he returned from his labours at night. Of his splendid acting in Sir Edward Mortimer, and in 'Oronoko,' a masterly description may be found in Macready's 'Reminiscences.'

He was now in the very height of his fame, the lion of the day ; all the greatest men, poets, statesmen, nobles, crowded his dressing-room, and were eager to secure him for their guest ; and we have pictures of young Charles playing with heaps of guineas, and bank-notes littering the drawing-room like waste-paper. But he evaded the invitations of his aristocratic friends as much as possible. 'I can act a character without fear of committing myself,' he would say, 'but I can't sit down at a lord's table with comfort, when they expect every word that comes out of my mouth to be wonderful.' He was painfully conscious of the defects of his education,\* and of his ignorance of the manners of good society : to commit a solecism in good breeding was exquisite pain to him ; and the apprehension of doing so

\* During his strolling days he bought a Latin dictionary and learned a number of words and phrases by heart, which he was very fond of quoting on every possible occasion, sometimes correctly, sometimes incorrectly. It was probably this love for and use of quotations which first gave rise to the assertion, repeated by some of his biographers, that he had been educated at Eton.

kept him in a state of extreme discomfort. Whitbread used to say to Mrs. Kean : ‘We do not invite him because it seems so painful to him.’ Once, after dining with Lord Byron, he suddenly disappeared to finish the evening at Tom Cribb’s : his destination being suspected, the noble poet went thither and found him drinking gin with some members of the ‘fancy,’ and damning all lords. Byron broke off all friendship with him after that, until he saw him play Sir Giles. A certain Countess once requested him to recite at her house, for the entertainment of the Duke of Wellington, whose numerous engagements prevented him visiting the theatres, but he refused. ‘I am asked by these people,’ he replied to some one who was remonstrating with him upon the subject, ‘not as an equal, not as a gentleman, scarcely as a man of talent, but as a wild beast to be stared at.’ Yet Macready, who passed an evening with him after his first success, speaks admiringly of ‘the mild and modest expression of his Italian features, and his unassuming manner, which I may, perhaps, justly describe as partaking in some degree of shyness.’ Crabb Robinson remarks that ‘from the gentleness of his manner, no one would anticipate the actor who excels in such bursts of passion.’ He was very sparing of words until the glass had circulated pretty freely, then he became animated, fluent, and communicative, sang with ‘a touching grace,’ gave anecdotes and imitations that ‘equalled the best display Mathews ever made, and almost convulsed us with laughter.’ But, alas ! he had an inherent love of low company and an overweening vanity that could not endure a sense of inferiority to anyone ; among his tavern companions he was a king, and that was the only position acceptable to him. He would at times indulge in the wildest frolics, mount on horseback after the performance and ride away into the country at such a pace, leaping gates and hedges, that a belated wayfarer might have taken him for the foul fiend himself ; at others, the streets of London and the lowest purlieus of St. Giles’s were the

scenes of his extravagances. Unlike Cooke, however, we hear of his disappointing the audience only once. It was on the second performance of a revival of Massinger's 'Duke of Milan,' which proved a failure. When the time came for raising the curtain, Kean was not in the theatre, and was not anywhere to be found. After a night's debauch he had started in the morning for Greenwich, that was all they could learn, and another play had to be substituted. The next day he was found in Greenwich, helplessly intoxicated in a low public-house. The friends who discovered him called in a doctor, had him bandaged up, and carefully conveyed home ; the report given out was that he had dislocated his shoulder.

Soon rivals began to spring up. Cobham, a howling, mouthing creature who afterwards became a god at the Coburg, entered the field against him, to retire with ignominy. But a more celebrated contest was that with Junius Booth, the father of the present American tragedian. He had played Richard at Covent Garden in exact imitation of Kean, and was pronounced by a few to be equal, if not superior, to the master. To settle the question the Drury Lane management brought him over to their theatre. The trial-play was to be Othello, Kean the Moor, Booth the Iago. The house was crowded—the excitement prodigious. 'Booth,' says Barry Cornwall, 'at first seemed to shrink from the combat. He eventually, however, overcame his fear, and went through the part of Iago manfully. But Kean!—no sooner did the interest of the story begin, and the passion of the part justify his fervour, than he seemed to *expand* from the small, quick, resolute figure which had previously been moving about the stage, and to assume the vigour and dimensions of a giant. He glared down upon the now diminutive Iago ; he seized and tossed him aside, with frightful and irresistible vehemence. Till then we had seen Othello and Iago, as it were together : now the Moor seemed to occupy the stage alone. Up and

down, to and fro, he went, pacing about like the chased lion who has received his fatal hurt, but whose strength is still undiminished. The fury and whirlwind of the passions seemed to have endowed him with supernatural strength. His eye was glittering and bloodshot, his veins were swollen, and his whole figure restless and violent. It seemed dangerous to cross his path, and death to assault him. There is no doubt but that Kean was excited on this occasion in a most extraordinary degree, as much as though he had been maddened by wine. The impression which he made upon the audience has, perhaps, never been equalled in theatrical annals. Even the actors, hardened in their art, were moved. One comedian, a veteran of forty years' standing, told us that when Kean rushed off the stage in the third act, he (the narrator) felt all his face deluged with tears

"a thing, I give you my word, sir, that has never happened to me since I was a crack, thus high." Booth's defeat was complete. Although announced, he would not act with Kean the second night; he returned to Covent Garden, where the public crowded to hiss him for breaking his engagement. It was alleged that these disturbances were organised by 'the Wolves' (an actors' club, of which Kean was a principal member, held at the 'Coal Hole'); but if it were so, the public went with them.

Kean lacked the admirable judgment of Garrick, which prevented the latter appearing in characters that did not suit him. Garrick made but two mistakes, Romeo and Othello; but he did not persevere in them, and frequently after weeks of study would cast aside a part for a mere doubt of its suitability to his powers. Kean, more vain than judicious, rushed at everything—tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce. He appeared as Abel Drugger, as Tom Tug—and sang the songs very sweetly—and once as harlequin in a farce. He was the hero in Miss Porter's 'Switzerland,' in Bucke's 'Italian,' and in other monuments of portentous dulness. With the remembrance of John Kemble's magnificent per-

formance fresh in every memory, he played Coriolanus. His Brutus in Howard Payne's 'Fall of Tarquin' was a fine piece of acting. 'We can recollect no instance,' writes a critic in the *Times*, 'of an actor who could stand silently on the stage for minutes together, and, by calling up in succession all the shades and degrees of passion into his countenance, move his audience to silence and tears of true sympathy.' Lear was the last of his grand triumphs. The full beauty of his conception, however, was not revealed to the audience until several seasons later, when he rejected Tate's happy ending and restored Shakespeare's terrible catastrophe. 'They cannot tell what I can do until they see me with Cordelia dead in my arms,' he used to say; and the effect he produced in the last act was very great. Macready, however, perhaps because it was one of his own favourite parts, was not greatly impressed by the performance. Before he attempted the part, it is said he made several visits to St. Luke's and Bethlehem hospitals, to study the manifestations of insanity. This brings me to the consideration of that erroneous idea, still entertained by some people, that Kean was purely an unstudied and impulsive actor. An impulsive actor he was, and some of his grandest effects were flashes of inspiration;\* but unstudied he was not. On the contrary, he studied intensely. A contemporary, writing of his strolling days, says, 'He used to mope about for hours, walking for miles and miles alone with his hands in his pockets, thinking intensely on his characters. No one could get a word from him; he studied and slaved beyond any actor I ever knew.'

Nor did he relax his labours even when he had reached the highest pinnacle of his fame. 'Kean did not,' says Proctor, 'as some persons have conjectured, play at hazard. He did not throw himself passionately into his part, and trust to the impulse of the moment for success. He studied

\* Coleridge said his acting was reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning.

it long and anxiously; often during half the night. However occupied in the evening, whether in acting or otherwise, he would frequently begin to study when his family retired to rest, and convert his drawing-room into a stage. Here with a dozen candles, some on the floor, some on the table, and some on the chimney-piece and some near the pier-glass), he would act scene after scene ; considering the emphasis, the modulation of the verse, and the fluctuations of the character, with the greatest care. In the morning, he would perhaps rehearse a scene or two, exhibit some of his fine 'effects' before his wife, and conclude by inquiring, ' Do you think that will do?' And if she answered, as was generally the case, ' Oh, it's beautiful!' he would go away content. Yet he would, after all, frequently reject these same effects when he played the character in public ; and, upon being asked his reason for so doing, reply, ' I felt that what I did was right. Before, I was only rehearsing.' Probably no actor, except Garrick, ever had so great a *natural* genius for the stage as Kean, but had he not bestowed upon it the most perfect cultivation he would never have been the consummate artist he was.

In 1820, he paid his first visit to America. In New York as much as \$18 were paid for *the mere choice* of a box to hold nine persons. He reaped a golden harvest by his tour, and returned to Drury Lane for the following season. He then appeared as Hastings, Sir Pertinax Mac-sycophant, Wolsey, Don Felix, none of them good performances. In Miss Baillie's ' De Montfort,' however, he scored a success. In 1822, the Drury Lane management brought Young from Covent Garden. The announcement that the two tragedians were to appear together as Othello and Iago created an immense excitement ; places were secured six weeks in advance. Here were the representatives of the two opposing schools—the classic and romantic, into which the theatrical world was divided—brought face to face, thus affording a fine opportunity for impartial judgment upon their several merits.

'Since Quin and Garrick, or Garrick and Barry,' says Dr. Doran, 'no conjunction of great names moved the theatrical world like this. Both men put out all their powers, and the public profited by the magnificent display. Kean and Young acted together—Othello and Iago, Lothaire and Guiscard, Jaffier and Pierre, Alexander and Clytus, Posthumus and Iachimo, eliciting enthusiasm by all, but none so much as by Othello and Iago.' The *Examiner* critic, writing of this performance, characterises Kean's acting as infinitely surpassing all his former efforts.

'How shall we convey,' he says, 'an idea of these performances to those who were not present at them, and who will, we greatly fear, never have another opportunity of seeing such? For it is not in human nature to reach the pitch of excellence attained by Mr. Kean on the two occasions, without some extraordinary, involuntary stimulus, or sustain itself there for any length of time even with that stimulus.' What a contrast there must have been between the chiselled face, fine figure and sonorous voice of Young, and the gipsy features, small stature and hoarse tones of his rival. But one flash of those marvellous eyes would thrill an audience more than all the stately finished elocution of the Kemble School. It had been arranged that they should alternate the two parts, but after playing Iago to Young's Othello, Kean refused to comply with this condition: 'I will rather throw up my engagement,' he said, 'and you may seek your redress in the law courts. I had never seen Young act. Everyone has told me he could not hold a farthing rushlight to me, but he can! He is an actor, and though I flatter myself he could not act Othello as I, yet what chance should I have in Iago after him with his d—— musical voice? I tell you what: Young is not only an actor, such as I did not dream him to be, but he is a gentleman. Go to him, tell him then from me that if he will allow me to keep Othello and Jaffier I shall esteem it a personal obligation. Tell him he has made as great a hit in Iago as ever I did in Othello.'

But Kean could never reconcile himself to a rival, and he was particularly irritable against Young. ‘How much longer am I to play with that Jesuit?’ he demanded of the managers. So excessive was his jealousy that even the applause won by a foreign actor was insupportable to him. While at Paris, he went to see Talma in *Orestes*. The ovation was tremendous; Kean was of course loud in his praise. ‘Ah,’ replied Talma, ‘if you are so pleased with *Orestes*, you must see me to-morrow night in *Cinna*; that is a far finer performance.’ When they returned home, Mrs. Kean was enthusiastic about the great French tragedian. The next morning her husband insisted upon quitting Paris at once; he could not endure to witness such a second triumph.

We now approach the saddest portion of this sad story, for, in spite of the brilliancy of a few of its epochs, it is wholly sad; yet even the struggles and miseries of his earlier years are less melancholy to contemplate than that waste of magnificent opportunities which disgraced the period of his high fortunes. While he was playing at Taunton, in 1818 a lady was observed to faint away in a stage-box: no uncommon occurrence, as we have seen. She was conveyed into the green-room, and Kean showed her great attention. She proved to be the wife of a London Alderman, named Cox, who was staying in the town for a time. Kean was invited to their hotel, and afterwards to their house in London. This was the commencement of an unhappy intimacy. It would appear that the lady’s conduct had not previously been quite immaculate; that the passion, at least began on her side. The husband was strangely blind, he allowed her to visit the actor in his dressing-room; and when he was bankrupt, accepted money from Kean for his necessities. By-and-by, through some strange negligence, a packet of letters was found; an action commenced, and full damages were awarded to the injured (?) husband. The press denounced Kean in the most ferocious terms, and called upon the public to drive him from the stage. The

audience that once hung breathlessly upon his lips and greeted him with shouts of acclamation, now howled and hissed and refused to hear him. Dauntless as ever, he gave them scorn for scorn, insult for insult, as daringly as ever he did the poor yokels who offended him in his strolling days. But such a contest could not but terminate in his discomfiture ; his friends and patrons fell from him, his wife and child left him. In the provinces, everywhere he was received with the same disapprobation, except at Dublin, the people of which retained a grateful remembrance of his having given up a night's receipts to the relief of the starving Irish peasantry, and accorded him a hearty welcome. It was the death-blow to his fame and his life. Proctor presents us with a melancholy picture of him at this period : 'I called on him in London soon after the business' (the trial) 'had subsided, and when he was on the point of his exile to America. I never saw a man so changed ; he had all the air of desperation about him. He looked bloated with rage and brandy ; his nose was red, his cheeks blotched, his eyes bloodshot ; I really pitied him. He had lodgings in Regent Street ; but I believe very few of his former friends, of any respectability, now noticed him. The day I saw him he sat down to the piano, notwithstanding the agitated state of his mind, and sang for me 'Lord Ullin's Daughter,' with a depth, and power, and sweetness that quite electrified me. I had not heard him sing for many years ; his improvement was almost incredible ; his accompaniment was also far superior to his former style of playing. I could not repress a deep sentiment of sorrow at the wreck he presented, of genius, fame, and wealth. At this period, I believe, he had not one hundred pounds left of the many thousands he had received. His mind seemed shattered ; he was an outcast on the world. He left England a few days afterwards, and I never dreamt of seeing him again.'

In America another storm burst upon him. During his former trip he had made two visits to Boston ; the first was

highly successful ; the second, being out of the season, was a failure. One night, there being only about twenty people in the house, he refused to play, and left the town ; the dignity of the Bostonians was outraged, and, upon his return, they resolved to take vengeance for what they were pleased to consider an affront. His appearance upon the stage was the signal for a terrible riot ; missiles of all kinds, bottles, and brass balls, procured for the occasion, were hurled at him ; he had to fly for his life ; then the mob invaded the stage, sought for him in the dressing-rooms, and, not finding him there, surrounded the hotel at which he was staying, demanding him to be given up, and openly declaring their intention of killing him. It was with much difficulty he succeeded in effecting his escape. While in Canada some chiefs of the Hurons, who visited the theatre, were so much struck by his performance that they made him a chief of their tribe. He was delighted, declared that not even Drury Lane had conferred so high a distinction upon him, and seriously debated with himself whether he should not spend the remainder of his days with these children of the forest. When he returned to England he put on the dress and war-paint of the tribe, and received his friends in all the gravity of savage state.

'I shall not soon forget,' says Dr. Doran, 'that January night of 1827, on which he reappeared at Drury Lane in Shylock. A rush so fearful, an audience so packed, and reconciliation so complete, acting so faultless, and a dramatic enjoyment so exquisite, I never experienced. Nothing was heeded, indeed the scenes were passed over, until Shylock was to appear, and I have heard no such shout since as that which greeted him. Fire, strength, beauty, every quality of the actor seemed to have acquired fresh life. It was a deceptive, however. The actor was all but extinguished after this convulsive, but seemingly natural, effect. He lay in bed at the Hummum's hotel all day, amusing himself melancholily with his Indian gewgaws, and trying to find

healthy tonic in cognac.' He had come back a wreck in mind, body, and fortune. Between 1814 and 1827 his earnings had amounted to £200,000, and yet in this last-named year he found himself without a hundred pounds in the world. He had lived extravagantly, rented a house in Clarges Street, May Fair, for which Mrs. Kean, who seems to have loved display and grand company, was more responsible than he. Kean was innocent of one vice—gambling—but he squandered his money with reckless profusion. While under the influence of drink, sharpers would wheedle cheques out of him for large amounts, which were always presented at the bank before he was awake the next morning. He gave a great deal away in charity, in helping old companions, for he never forgot a benefit any more than he did an insult or an injury. Those who had been kind to him in his poor days had no need to solicit; he was always too eager to proffer; even any little debt he might have left unpaid was settled with magnificent interest.

Upon his return from America, Charles, who had just left Eton, where he had been an oppidan, demanded that £300 for three years should be settled upon his mother. Kean would not or could not comply, upon which the boy, then little more than sixteen, threw up the Indian cadetship his father had procured him and declared his intention of taking to the stage. To this Kean was bitterly averse, and they parted in anger. On October 1st, 1827, Charles made his first appearance upon the stage, at Drury Lane, as Young Norval. The performance was very severely commented upon by the press, and, indeed, seems to have been cold and very much below mediocrity. The next year there was a reconciliation between father and son, and Kean appeared at Glasgow for Charles's benefit, as Brutus to his Titus. In 1828 he went over to Paris to play. But the French stage was still fettered by its classical traditions, and the Parisians could not appreciate his natural and impulsive style. A thin audience sat out Richard almost in silence, until the

last act ; but his marvellous death scene electrified even them into enthusiasm. After two or three performances he threw up the engagement in disgust.

After the triumph of his opening night, the public soon perceived that only the wreck of their great actor had come back to them. Grattan's description of his appearance soon afterwards in the play of 'Ben Nazir,' is a dark picture of failing powers. After describing his entrance, his splendid dress, and the thunders of applause that greeted him, he goes on to say : ' He spoke, but what a speech ! The one I wrote consisted of eight or nine lines ; *his* was of two or three *sentences*, but not six consecutive words of the text. His look, his manner, his tone, were to *me* quite appalling ; to any other observer they must have been incomprehensible. He stood fixed, drawled out his incoherent words, and gave the notion of a man who had been half-hanged and then drawn through a horse-pond. . . . Kean went through it like a man in the last stage of exhaustion and decay. The act closed ; a dead silence followed the fall of the curtain.' Yet still at times transient gleams of his old powers would burst forth with all the old electric fire, and audiences still crushed to suffocation to see him. ' To those,' says Doran, ' who saw him from the front, there was not a trace of weakening power in him. But oh, ye few who stood in between the wings, where a chair was placed for him, do you not remember the saddening spectacle of that wrecked genius ; a man in his very prime, with not merely the attributes of age about him, but with some of the infirmities of it, which are wont to try the heart of love itself ? Have you forgotten that helpless, speechless, fainting mass bent up in that chair ; or the very unsavoury odour of the very brown, very hot, and very strong brandy and water, which alone kept alive the once noble Moor ? Aye, and still noble Moor : for when his time came, he looked about as from a dream, and sighed, and painfully got to his feet, swayed like a column, an earthquake,

and in not more time than is required in telling it, was before the audience, as strong and as intellectually beautiful as of old ; but only happy in the applause which gave him a little breathing space, and saved him from falling dead upon the stage.'

Some years previously he had purchased an estate in the Isle of Bute, and thither he frequently retired when he was too shattered in health to act. But he had by this time become such a slave to intemperance, that even when away from his haunts and associates he could not refrain from the poison that was destroying him body and mind. Young William Beverley, now the celebrated artist, the son of his old Gloucester manager, was frequently with him at Bute. While the boy sketched at the window, Kean would sit at the piano and play and sing Moore's melodies, which he did with great taste and feeling. Once he said to his young guest, in whose presence he never committed those excesses which were fast completing the destruction of a constitution already irretrievably shattered, 'If I could keep you always by my side, I might be saved yet.'

But the magic of his name still wrought as a spell upon the public, and when in 1830 he announced a farewell performance at the King's Theatre, previous to a proposed third visit to America, which never took place, the crush at the doors was so terrible for hours, that strong men wedged in the living mass begged and implored to be allowed to pass out, unable to endure the pressure ; women fainted and could not be extricated, and many persons were seriously injured. Half-dying as he was, he went through a performance of unparalleled fatigue—the fourth act of Richard, the fourth act of Shylock, the fifth of Sir Giles, the second of Macbeth, and the third of Othello. In Macbeth only did his weakness overcome him, in the other parts he was magnificent. It was the last revival, and he could not play for some time afterwards. He had repeatedly refused to act with Macready, calling him contemptuously 'a player ;' but

in November, 1832, he played Othello to his Iago for nine nights. It was the most formidable rivalry he had yet sustained. Macready was a finer actor than either Booth or Young, and Kean was not what he had been in those days. The contest was pretty equal. He now appeared occasionally, whenever his indomitable spirit, sustained by stimulants, could mount above the weakness of his body. ‘Until four years ago,’ he said one night, holding a glass of brandy and water in his hand, ‘I could play Othello without this ; now I can’t do without it.’

During the last year of his life he went to live at Richmond, in a house next to the theatre, at which he acted sometimes. The old haughty courage that had faced the fury of a Drury audience, survived to the last. One night there was a row in the little theatre. ‘Go and tell them if they are not quiet within five minutes, I quit the house,’ he said to the manager ; and the message delivered, he walked upon the stage in his private clothes and seated himself before the footlights watch in hand. Before the time had expired there was the quietude of death. Thither came faithful Miss Tidswell to nurse him. ‘I am no relation to him,’ she replied to the doctor’s inquiries, ‘but I have known him from childhood, and it is hard to see him fading away in this the best part of his life !’ and she burst into tears. We do not hear that he ever did anything for this old friend to whom he owed so much, except playing Don Felix for her farewell benefit in 1821, but she seems to have been comfortably off and perhaps did not need his assistance. Disreputable old Anne Carey, too, had turned up again with ‘a dear brother’ of Edmund’s, and made her home in his house.

The 25th of March, 1833, was the end. For the first and the last time father and son stood upon the London stage together, Charles playing Iago to his father’s Othello. The event caused a great excitement among playgoers ; the house was crammed to suffocation. But Kean went through the

part ‘dying as he went,’ until he came to the ‘Farewell,’ and the strangely appropriate words, ‘Othello’s occupation’s gone.’ Then he gasped for breath, tried to commence the next speech, but fell upon his son’s shoulder, moaning, ‘I am dying—speak to them for me!’ And so the curtain descended upon him—for ever. He was conveyed to Richmond. ‘Come home to me; forget and forgive?’ he wrote to his wife. And she came. An hour before he died, he sprang out of bed, exclaiming, ‘A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!’ and his last utterances were the dying words of Octavian, ‘Farewell, Flo—Floranthe.’ This was on the 15th of May, 1833. His mother survived him only eight days, but his wife lived until 1849. The doctor who attended Kean in his last illness remarked the wonderful likeness there was between the mother and son, which would seem to set at rest all doubts of her maternity. An application was made to the Dean of Westminster to forego the usual fees and allow the body of the great actor to rest beside his predecessor and only peer, David Garrick. It was refused. So Edmund Kean had to be buried in the obscure little Richmond Church. More than a thousand people came to the house to look upon the coffin ere it was committed to its last resting-place. Sheridan Knowles, Macready, and many other members of the theatrical profession, together with some of the principal inhabitants of the town, attended the funeral, and nearly every shop was closed along the line of route. Everything he left behind, all his presents and mementoes, had to be sent to the hammer to pay his debts.

‘Over the grave of one of the greatest of actors,’ says Doran, nobly, ‘something may be said in extenuation of his faults. Such curse as there can be in a mother’s indifference hung about him before his birth. A young Huron, of whose tribe he subsequently became a member, could not have lived a more savage, but certainly enjoyed a more comfortable and better tended, boyhood. Edmund

Kean, from the very time of boyhood, had genius, industry, and ambition, but, with companionship enough to extinguish the first, lack of reward to dull the second, and repeated visitations of disappointment that might have warranted the exchange of high hopes for brutal despair—he nourished his genius, maintained his industry, and kept an undying ambition, under circumstances when to do so was a part of heroism . . . Kean was trained upon blows and curses, and starvation, and the charity of strangers. It was enough to make all his temper convert to fury, and any idea of such a young, unnurtured savage ever becoming the inheritor of the mantle worn by the great actors of old, would have seemed a madness even to that mother who soon followed him in death, Nancy Carey. But Edmund Kean cherished the idea warm in his bosom, never ceased to qualify himself for the attempt, studied for it while he starved, and when about to make it, felt and said that success would drive him mad. I believe it did, but whether or not, I can part from *the* great actor of my young days only with a tender respect. I do not forget the many hours of bright intellectual enjoyment for which I, in common with thousands, was indebted to him, and, in the contemplation of this actor's incomparable genius, I desire to forget the errors of the man.'

---

## CHAPTER II.

CHARLES MAYNE YOUNG.

A royal favourite—Household troubles—An amateur actor—Julia Grimani—A pathetic story—First appearance at the Haymarket—His Hamlet—Cassius—Engaged to play with Kean—His farewell benefit—His fine character—His eccentricities—As an actor.

ALTHOUGH Charles Young was essentially an actor of the Kemble school, and the finest of its disciples, chronologically he belongs to this period. He was born in Fenchurch Street

in 1777. His father was a surgeon. While yet a child, Charles went on a visit to his uncle, Dr. Müller, who was the court physician, at Copenhagen. There he so won upon the affections of the King and Queen and Queen-Dowager, that they desired to keep him altogether. At parting, they presented him with a purse, which the Queen had worked for him, and which was filled with gold, a watch and his portrait, the fellow of which was hung in the King's private cabinet. He commenced his education at Eton, but altered circumstances at home, through the dissipated habits of the head of the household, rendered his stay there brief, and he was removed to Merchant Taylors'. By-and-by the father's conduct rose to such a height of infamy, that the sons removed their mother from beneath the paternal roof, and Charles took her support upon himself. He began the battle of life as a merchant's clerk. It does not appear how he first came to entertain the idea of the stage; the only information to be gleaned upon the subject is that given in the 'Memoirs of Mathews,' who relates that he met him as an amateur in some theatricals held in a loft over a stable, in Short's Gardens, Drury Lane. Young soon grew tired of the dull drudgery of office work, and in 1798 he made his *début* at Liverpool, under the name of Mr. Green, as Young Norval. He must have been at least tolerably successful, as the year afterwards he was engaged for the principal business at Manchester. Thence he migrated to Edinburgh, and at once established himself in so high a position, both histriionically and socially, that in 1802 we find him a guest at the table of Walter Scott, with whom he contracted an intimate and lasting friendship.

It was in 1804 that he first met the beautiful Julia Grimali, who afterwards became his wife. She appeared towards the close of the Haymarket season of 1804 as Juliet, and made so decided a success, that, her son informs us, the managers of all three theatres were anxious to secure her. She determined, however, to go into the provinces for

a time, and appeared at Liverpool that same year. Charles Young was the leading man, the Romeo, Jaffier, Hamlet of the theatre. Very soon their stage-love became a reality, and early in the following year they were married. It was a deep and passionate love upon both sides. But their happiness was doomed to be short-lived. The lady died within fifteen months, after giving birth to a child, now the Reverend Julian Young, and his father's biographer. Although he survived her fifty years he never married again, and her memory remained green and beautiful to him through all that time. As he grew old this feeling intensified. He would at times take her miniature from the recesses of a secret drawer, and, as he gazed upon it until the tears ran down his furrowed checks, he would deplore its unworthy presentment of her sweet face, and then he would produce from a cherished morocco case a long tress of chestnut hair. His very hopes of heaven were interwoven with her image, and 'Thank God ! I shall soon see my Julia,' were almost his last words. The innocent cause of this bereavement was christened Julian,\* a combination of his mother's names, Julia Ann. That mother's old friend, Lady Catherine Howard, the daughter of the Earl of Suffolk, offered to take the infant ; but the father, wisely disapproving of the boy being reared in a sphere so much above his prospects in life, preferred confiding him to the care of another kind lady who made a similar proposal, the daughter of one Captain Forbes, an officer in the Royal Navy.

Thanks to the warm recommendation of his friend and old fellow amateur, Mathews, a correspondence was opened between him and George Colman. Young asked £20 a week and a benefit, to which the manager replied that such terms 'much exceeded any bargain formed within my memory between a manager of the Haymarket Theatre and a performer coming to try his fortunes upon the London

\* Mr. Julian Young says that his name suggested to Scott that of the hero of 'Peveril of the Peak.'

boards.' 'We propose, then,' he says, in the last paragraph of his letter, '£14 a week and a benefit, you to take all the profits of that benefit, however great, after paying the established charges. Should there be a deficiency, we ensure that you shall clear £100 by it. This, upon mature deliberation, is all we think prudence enables us to offer.' The offer was accepted, and Young made his appearance at the Haymarket on the 22nd of June, 1807, as Hamlet. It was an undoubted success. But from one corner of the theatre came a persistent hiss. Young soon succeeded in detecting the malevolent personage, and recognised in him *his own father*. It was not the first time this excellent gentleman had given public proof of animosity against his children. Once he entered a hackney-coach in which one of his sons (who afterwards attained some eminence as a surgeon) was sitting, and, without speaking a word, struck him a blow in the face. The young man ordered the coach to stop, and, as he alighted, turned to the astonished passengers and said, 'Ladies and gentlemen, that is my father.' Peake, writing of this period in 'The Memoirs of the Colman Family,' says: 'Colman was fortunate this year in the engagement of Mr. Charles Young, from Manchester, who proved himself for many succeeding years an actor of sterling merit, a perfect gentleman in his manners, and a most delightful companion in private life. Mr. Young was indeed an honour to his profession.' Boaden, in his 'Memoirs of the Kembles,' gives the following notice of his first appearance: 'My amiable and accomplished friend, Mr. R. Westall, I remember, begged that we might see this *début* together; he had a side box at the Haymarket on that night, and we received very great satisfaction from that able and judicious actor. Confessedly, however, it was the Hamlet of Kemble, discriminated only by the personal perfections, or, if you will, imperfections of the performer. It was not so philosophic, but more solemn; there was more vehemence and less pathos; the volume of voice was great, and of good

tone, but the articulation was not nice, and he laboured under a lisp whenever the letter *s* occurred. But there was great ardour, vast animation, powerful action, untiring energy, good sense.' He played a round of characters : Don Felix in 'The Wonder,' 'Rolla in 'Pizarro,' Penruddock in 'The Wheel of Fortune,' Petruchio, 'The Stranger,' and Sir Edward Mortimer, with considerable success.

The following year, 1808, he received an offer to join the Covent Garden company for the ensuing winter at £18 per week and a benefit. John Philip was, of course, the paramount power at Covent Garden ; Cooke was also one of the company ; yet Young held his ground firmly. He achieved his greatest success in Kemble's revival of 'Julius Caesar,' in 1812, in which Young played Cassius. Many people considered it was a finer performance than Kemble's Brutus. Mr. Julian Young gives the following vivid description of the principal actors in this play : 'One would have imagined,' he says, 'that the invariable white toga, common to all the male performers, beautiful as it is when properly worn and tastefully adjusted, would have rendered it difficult at first for any but frequenters of the theatre to distinguish, in the large number of the *dramatis personæ* on the stage, John Kemble from Daniel Terry, or Charles Young from Charles Kemble. Whereas I feel persuaded that any intelligent observer, though he had never entered the walls of a theatre before, if he had but studied the play in his closet, would have had no difficulty in recognising the calm, cold, self-contained, stoical dignity of John Kemble's *walk* the very ideal of Marcus Brutus ; or in the pale, wan, austere, 'lean and hungry look' of Young, and in his quiet and nervous *pace*, the irritability and impetuosity of Caius Cassius ; or in the handsome, joyous face and graceful, joyous tread of Charles Kemble, his pliant body bending forward in courtly adulation of "great Cæsar," Mark Antony himself ; while Fawcett's sour, sarcastic countenance would not more aptly portray "quick-mettled" Casca than his

abrupt and hasty stamp upon the ground when Brutus asked him, "What had chanced that Cæsar was so sad?" Young was an intense admirer of his great prototype, and the latter seems to have been partial to his young rival and *confrère*. The last time they played together was in this tragedy. After the curtain fell, Kemble entered Young's dressing-room, and presented him with several 'properties' he had worn in favourite characters, and begged him to keep them in memory of their having fought together, alluding to the battle of Sardis in the play. 'Well,' he said, 'we have often had high words on the stage, but never off.' On Young saying something that touched him, he caught hold of his hand, wrung it in his, and then hurried from the room.

Young remained at Covent Garden until 1822. His salary had been raised to £25 a week, but in that year the great attraction of Edmund Kean at Drury Lane so lowered the receipts of the rival house that a general reduction of salaries was proposed, and Young was informed that from that time the management could not afford to give him more than £20 a week. He refused to submit to the proposal. The Drury Lane managers hearing of this, immediately offered him £50 a night, the same sum they were paying Edmund Kean, to perform three nights a week for nine months. The offer was immediately accepted, and bills were forthwith posted over all London, announcing that Edmund Kean and Charles Young would appear together in 'Othello,' an event already referred to in the last chapter. In 1823 Young returned to Covent Garden. Twelve months before the managers had lost his services for a paltry £5 a week; they were now glad to give him his Drury Lane salary, £50 per night, and from that time he never received a less sum. In 1828 he essayed Cooke's great part, Sir Pertinax Macsycophant, and in the same year he played Rienzi in Miss Mitford's tragedy of that name. Strange to say, in an age that was so fruitful in dramatic writing, good, bad, and indifferent, while Kean, the Kembles,

and even Macready, then only just rising out of obscurity, had authors more than enough to write for them, Young continued only to repeat the old parts, or to perform such new ones as did not rise in importance above two or three others in the same play.

In 1829 he received an offer from the United States of £12,000 for a ten months' engagement, but having already made up his mind to retire, and being in a position to regard with indifference even so tempting a bait, he declined it. His farewell benefit took place at Covent Garden on May 31st, 1832; and in Hamlet, the part he had selected for his first appearance in London twenty-five years before, he took his final leave of the London public. In honour to him, Mathews appeared as Polonius, Macready as the Ghost. So great was the demand for places that the orchestra was converted into stalls, an almost unprecedented event in those days of an uninvaded pit. The receipts were £643, and £81 were returned to those who were unable to find even standing-room.

He survived his retirement twenty-four years, dying in 1856, at the advanced age of seventy-nine. A letter written to his son by a lady who knew him well, thus eloquently and pathetically describes the closing years of his life : ‘ His gifts and accomplishments were various. His musical taste, his melodious voice, his wide range of anecdote, his extensive knowledge of life, his humorous power of portraying character, his arch, droll, waggish ways and stories, lent to his companionship a charm which rendered him a desired guest in many of the stateliest houses of our aristocracy, where young men and maidens would gather round him eagerly : the one to discuss the incidents of the “run,” and the comparative merits of dogs and horses (for your father, as you know, rode well and delighted in the chase); the other to beg for hints over their song-books, and to listen to his exquisite recitations ; while all of every age and degree could thoroughly enjoy the waggery of his spirits, and join

in the laughter called forth by his innocent peculiarities. He had a somewhat stately manner, tinged no doubt by the old dramatic element, which was so pronounced in him—and so far he was certainly artificial—but this was eagerly distinguished from his true nature, so that it only imparted a kind of grotesque flavour to his quaint, and sometimes grandiloquent, treatment of trifles. . . . Many were the acts of large and thoughtful liberality that signalled his life throughout long years, and which became known only when infirmity and failing memory obliged him to lean on others as his almoners. By the side of his sick-bed stood a little mahogany table with an ever-opening drawer, into which the large white hand would be thrust as oft as any tale of sorrow or application for help reached his ears. “What will ye have?” was the only question asked, and out came the gold and silver without stint; and “Mind ye let me know when ye want more for the poor creatures?” was sure to be his parting injunction. . . . I have often wished that Gainsborough or Sir Joshua could have drawn him as he sat in his richly brocaded dressing-gown and black velvet cap, with the dark eyes gleaming from beneath the great eyebrows; the snowy hair, and grave serene mouth firmly closed, until some sally of nonsense from one of his grandsons, or some stray joke from an odd nook in his own memory, would light up the old face with the rippling sunshine of mirth, and show how light a heart he carried beneath the burden of fourscore years. . . . To those who did, and who count it a joy for ever to have loved and been loved by him, I commend his dear memory. He wore the grand old name of gentleman unsullied to the end, and died in the fulness of his years beloved, honoured, and lamented.’

He was very eccentric in his habits, of which his son relates some very amusing particulars. ‘He considered humidity the besetting sin of our insular climate, and thought it therefore expedient to counteract its effects by scientific rule. He had but little scientific knowledge, and as I have

less than none, I will not attempt to define what I do not understand ; but he *talked* much of the benefits of the rarefaction of the air by means of heat. The practical results of his theory I could understand when I would enter his bedroom in the middle of July, at night-time, and see a perfect furnace blazing up the chimney ; his bedroom candle lighted on a chest of drawers ; two wax candles lighted on the chimney ; two lighted on his toilet-table ; a policeman's lantern lighted for the night ; and the handle of a warming-pan protruding from his bed, and remaining there till he was prepared to enter it.' He preferred adulterated articles to pure ones ; manufactured champagne to the juice of the grape, etc. He had a horror of a home-baked loaf, and never went into the country without making a descent upon a baker's shop, 'and filling the carriage with white, viscous, alumy bread, sufficient to have lasted our household through a siege of moderate duration.' He would never have his fires lit with any other wood but certain prepared chips, covered with resin, which he carried about in huge stacks.

Fanny Kemble says that he had no tragic proclivities, but a perception and passion for humour which he indulged in private constantly, in the most entertaining and surprising manner. Ludicrous stories, personal mimicry, the most admirable imitations of national accents, a power of grimace that equalled Grimaldi, and the most irresistible comic way of resuming in the midst of the broadest buffoonery, the stately dignity of his own natural countenance, voice, and manner. 'It would be difficult to say what his best performances were, for he had never either fire, passion, or tenderness ; but never wanted propriety, dignity, and a certain stately grace.' Planché relates several anecdotes of his facetiousness and love of fun. 'The last time he called upon me,' he says, 'he left his card, upon which was inscribed, "Tis I, my lord, the early village cock."

### CHAPTER III.

ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON.

Theatre Royal pastrycook-shop—At Bath—Engaged by Colman—‘The Iron Chest’ Story of King George III.—An extraordinary ‘double’—The Duke Aranza—Origin of the Surrey Theatre—Anecdotes of Rowland Hill—A grotesque quarrel—Origin of the Olympic Theatre—The Bohemian and fireworks hoaxes—Making use of a friend—Lessee of Drury Lane—The company—Elliston in the character of shopman—A triumphal entry—A royal benediction—An embarrassing dinner-party—Bankruptcy—Last appearance—‘Bribery and Corruption’—Talfourd upon his acting.

‘MAGNIFICENT were thy capriccios on this globe of earth, ROBERT WILLIAM ELLISTON!’ apostrophises Charles Lamb. ‘Wherever Elliston walked, sat, or stood still, there was the theatre. He carried about with him his pit, boxes, and galleries, and set up his portable playhouse at corners of streets and in the market-places. Upon flintiest pavements he trod the boards still; and if his theme chanced to be passionate, the green baize carpet of tragedy spontaneously rose beneath his feet,’ etc.

This famous comedian, who has been immortalised by Elia’s matchless pen, was born in Orange Street, Bloomsbury, in 1774; his father was a watchmaker; his uncles, Dr. Elliston and the Reverend Thomas Martyn, were professors at Cambridge; they both took a great interest in the boy’s fortunes, placed him at St. Paul’s School, and were his friends throughout their lives. When he was about seventeen he attended a French class held by a Madame Cotterille, who lived over a pastrycook-shop in Bedford Street, Strand. Twice in the year this lady got up an amateur performance among her pupils; at one of these Elliston appeared as Pyrrhus in ‘The Distressed Mother,’ with such success that from that time he conceived a passion for the stage. Among

the pupils was another future great actor, Charles Mathews, who, on Robert William's second appearance, played the Chaplain to his Chamont, in Otway's 'Orphan.' In addition to this, Mathews tells us, in his autobiography : 'He gave a specimen of his vocal powers by singing, between the play and farce, 'To Anacreon in Heaven,' at a table covered with punch-bowl and glasses, while the scholars sat round as a chorus. A gayer specimen of juvenile jollity I never witnessed. His joyous exuberance of mirthful enjoyment was worthy Bacchus himself. His laughter-loving eye and round dimpled face were never displayed to more advantage, even in after years, when crowded audiences gave their testimony to his mirth-inspiring comic powers : all predicted his future greatness.'

The end of this amateuring was that at eighteen he ran away from home and school, and proceeded to Bath. There, after some difficulty and delay, he succeeded in being engaged by William Dimond, the then lessee of the theatre. After remaining there a short time playing small parts he migrated to Leeds, and ranged himself under the banner of our old friend Tate Wilkinson. Here the promise of the Theatre Royal pastrycook-shop was more than fulfilled, and, although he had been but a few months upon the stage, he played principal business with marked success. Indeed, so rapid was his progress, that Kemble entered into negotiations with him for Drury Lane ; these, however, came to nothing, and he went back to Bath, where he found a wife in the person of a Miss Rundell, a teacher of dancing, an amiable lady, who proved to him a most estimable and faithful partner. The Bath Theatre was, at this period, the best out of London, and any actor who made a success upon its boards was certain of obtaining an opening in the metropolis. Five years in this admirable school made of the promising novice a finished actor, and in the summer of 1796 he made his *début* at the Haymarket as Octavian, in Colman's once-famous musical drama of 'The Mountaineers,' and as

Vapour in the farce of ‘My Grandmother.’ ‘No performer of better promise has presented himself in London for many years,’ was the dictum of a leading journal. His success, both with the public and the press, was at once assured. His Bath engagement compelled him to leave London in the following month. Colman, however, secured him for the next season, at the opening of which he appeared successfully as Sir Edward Mortimer in ‘The Iron Chest,’ in which Kemble had signally failed in the previous winter. This was a triumph of no mean order, for he thus performed the almost unprecedented feat of revivifying a condemned play. So rapidly did he now rise in popularity that the Covent Garden manager offered him £200 for twelve performances. During his London engagement, he did some extraordinary feats in travelling, for those pre-steam days, playing at Covent Garden one night and at Bristol the next, for upwards of a week ; he also performed alternate nights at Bath and Windsor.

Elliston was a great favourite with their Majesties George III. and Queen Charlotte ; he had taken the Weymouth Theatre, and, during a visit of the King to this, his favourite watering-place, had obtained his bespeak. On the night in question, the manager came down early to see that all was in proper order ; upon entering the royal box he was startled to find a gentleman there fast asleep ; a second glance showed him it was the King himself. It was nearly time to open the doors, but how to awake the royal sleeper ? Suddenly a happy thought suggested itself ; descending into the orchestra, he took up a violin and began playing ‘God Save the King.’ His Majesty awoke, and looked out of the box. ‘Hey, hey ! what, what ?’ he cried, with a dazed look. ‘Oh, I see, Elliston. Rain came on—ran in here—took a nap. What’s o’clock ?’ ‘Nearly six, your Majesty.’ ‘Six ! Send to her Majesty—say I’m here. Stay, stay ; this wig won’t do. Eh, eh—don’t keep the people waiting ; light up—let ’em in ; light up—let ’em in. Ah, ah ! fast asleep ;

play well to-night, Elliston—great favourite with the Queen.' When, after the performance was over, the manager attended the royal party to their carriage, the King continued to repeat, with a chuckle, 'Fast asleep, eh, Elliston ! fast asleep.'

Already those extraordinary eccentricities which have rendered Elliston more famous even than his talents, and those unfortunate habits which ultimately proved his ruin and death, had begun to develop themselves. Heavy drinking was the besetting sin of the age, and indulged in by every class, from the prince to the labourer ; it was impossible then that actors, whose temptations are so far greater than those of private men, should be exempt from the prevailing vice ; it proved the destruction of more than one of the most brilliant of their order. That is all changed now, however, and there is no body of public men more sober than actors. To a too great fondness for the bottle Elliston added a passion for gambling. Probably it was only the earnings of his wife, who kept a dancing academy with a large and aristocratic connection, first in Bath and afterwards in London, that saved him from ruin in the early part of his career.

During the Bath recess, when not playing in town, he indulged in strolling, took the Theatres Royal Wells and Shepton Mallet, with a company of some half-dozen people, he himself playing Hamlet and harlequin, or Macbeth and clown, in one night. On one occasion he 'doubled' the parts of Richard the Third and Richmond. In the fifth act of the play these two characters succeed each other in every alternate scene, but meet in the last for the fight. A little adjustment of dress and a little alteration of voice sufficed to mystify the rustics, until the climax, when a scene-shifter dressed up was thrust on to represent Richmond, with directions to keep his back well to the audience, not open his lips, but at the cue 'fight like the devil,' while Elliston shifting about his position and changing his tones, alternately hurled defiance at Richard and Richmond.

In 1803 he bade farewell to Bath, and from that period London became his home. So great was his popularity that in that same year, finding the Haymarket wholly inadequate to accommodate his numerous patrons, he took the King's Theatre opposite for his benefit. By five o'clock in the afternoon the crowd was so great and so obstreperous, that they broke down the doors and poured into the house. Money-takers and check-takers were borne down by the crush, and the money had to be collected after the place was filled. He himself, for that purpose, went round, euphuistically announcing that 'the terms of admission had not in many cases been complied with.' And when he had to apologise for ten rows of people seated upon the stage, he declaimed upon the necessity of accommodating those who had done him an honour, the remembrance of which would never be eradicated from his heart, and humbly trusted that they would not deny to a Briton that favour their spontaneous goodness formerly granted to a foreigner—alluding to Catalani. The play was 'Pizarro.' The crowd on the stage made a half-circle round the actors. In the first act, as Elvira rose from the couch on which she is discovered at the rising of the curtain, her mantle fell off, thereupon a young lady, quite forgetting where she was, picked it up and very politely begged to be allowed to replace it upon the actress's shoulders. The *contretemps* must have been somewhat embarrassing in a tragic scene.

The next season he was at Drury Lane, where he made one of his marked successes as Duke Aranza in 'The Honeymoon.' Poor Tobin's comedy had long lain shrouded by dust in the managerial limbo, and was dragged out only as a *pis aller* to fill up a gap. But it proved a trump card, and holds the stage to this day. Like Gerald Griffin's 'Gisippus,' it was, however, a posthumous birth, and the ears that had once longed for such acclamations were now mouldering in the grave. It is agreed upon all sides that Elliston's acting in this comedy was the very perfection of

art, and has never since been approached. Yet his salary at this time was only £20 a week. His benefits, however, alone represented a large income. His monetary position may be guessed from the fact of his taking, about this period, a house in Stratford Place; an absurd piece of ostentation, however, against which all his friends endeavoured to dissuade him.

A passion for management now seized upon him, and he was at one time in treaty for the theatres of Dublin, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham—the two last he ultimately secured—to say nothing of such small fry as Croydon, Leicester, Leamington, of which he also became lessee. In 1809, he took upon lease the circus in the Blackfriars Road, and altered it into a theatre. Rowland Hill's chapel was building at the same time, and that modern Prynne was very irate at seeing ‘the devil's house’ progressing so much more rapidly than his conventicle, and made frequent appeals to *his* audience to loosen their purse-strings. Upon the burning down of Covent Garden, this excellent Christian announced it from the pulpit as ‘Great news, my brethren, a great triumph has taken place over the devil and the stage-players—a fire in one of their houses. Oh, may there be one consumed in every fire; it is my fervent prayer!’ Yet a score of firemen lost their lives in the conflagration.

Elliston opened the Surrey Theatre on Easter Monday, 1809; he was then playing at the Lyceum, whither the Drury Lane company had migrated after the burning of their theatre. In 1811 he returned to the Haymarket at £40 per week and two clear benefits. During the season, a grotesque quarrel and reconciliation took place between him and Munden.

One of Munden's favourite points in Old Rapid, the tailor ('Cure for the Heartache'), was to unfold a new coat upon the back of a chair, and, with all the pride of an artist, remove one by one the papers that enveloped the brass buttons.

This always brought down great laughter and applause. One night Elliston, who was playing Young Rapid, was seized with an irresistible impulse to appropriate this business ; he did so, and carried off the usual honours. As soon as the scene was over, Munden, with tears in his eyes, rushed into the green-room. ‘Where is he ? Let me tear him to pieces !’ he cried. ‘Where is this Jackanapes ?’ Elliston had ensconced himself behind the folds of Mrs. Glover’s satin dress, but the enraged actor, darting upon him, dragged him forth, and calling him ‘assassin,’ ‘parricide,’ soundly belaboured him. Four nights afterwards they played together in the ‘Road to Ruin.’ At the end of the third act, Munden again ran into the green-room crying, ‘Where is he ?’ ‘Ah, Bobby,’ he said, running up to him, ‘I forgive you the buttons ; you have made me to-night—immortalised yourself. I’ll never play with any Harry Dornton but you, Bobby. You’ve beat us all to-night. But, Bobby,’ he added, in a more serious tone, ‘don’t dash my buttons any more.’ Astley, wishing to get rid of the Olympic Pavilion, in Wych Street, that he had built for a circus, made overtures to Elliston to take it. Although the lessee of some half-dozen theatres already, he eagerly seized upon the offer. ‘The very thing for me !’ he exclaimed, ‘so near Drury ; such a family circle ; I’ll set about it directly.’ But the proprietors of the patent theatre thought ‘Little Drury,’ as he had christened it, somewhat too near, and there being a flaw in the license, it was closed at the end of a month. It reopened, however, after an interval, and among the company engaged, as I have recorded, was Edmund Kean.

Business at Birmingham had been very bad for some time, when the walls were suddenly covered with bills announcing the appearance at the Theatre Royal of a Bohemian of extraordinary strength, and stature, who would go through various evolutions with a stone of upwards of a ton weight, which he would toss about as easily as a tennis-ball. The night announced for his appearance came ; the house was

crowded ; the audience had scarcely patience to listen to the words of the play, all were on the tiptoe of expectation for the performance of this modern Hercules. At length the curtain fell ; then came a delay, during which impatience broke into furious clamour. At length, with pale and woeful face, Elliston rushed before the curtain : ‘The Bohemian has deceived me,’ he cried : ‘*that* I could have pardoned, but he has deceived you, my friends—*you* ;’ and for a moment he hid his face behind his pocket-handkerchief, as though to conceal his emotion. Then bursting forth again, he went on, ‘I repeat he has deceived me ; he is not here. The man, of whatever name or nation he may be, who breaks his word, commits an offence which——’ Here this Joseph Surface aphorism was drowned by the yells of disappointed gods and pitites. ‘The correspondence,’ he continued, as soon as he could again make himself heard, ‘is in my pocket ;’ and he drew forth a number of letters. ‘Does any gentleman here read German ? if so, let him step forward.’ No gentleman volunteered. ‘Am I then left alone ? Then I’ll translate it for you.’ Another uproar, and one or two voices cried out, ‘No, no.’ Like Buckingham, he chose to consider this a ‘cheerful shout and general acclaim,’ and replacing the letters in his pocket, resumed, ‘I obey ; the correspondence shall not be read. But the *stone* is here, you shall see it ; you are my patrons, ladies and gentlemen, and you have a right to be satisfied.’ Here he winked at the orchestra, which struck up, ‘The Battle of Prague ;’ up went the curtain, and disclosed a huge sand rock labelled ‘*This is the stone.*’ It need scarcely be added the whole thing was a hoax from beginning to end.

His passion for grandiloquent speech-making was irrepressible ; he never neglected an opportunity of addressing the audience, and these addresses came to be regarded as a portion of the entertainment ; many very highly amusing effusions of this kind have been preserved. While manager of the Worcester Theatre, he announced a grand display of

fireworks for his benefit ; the house was a mere handbox, and such an exhibition was totally impracticable. This he well knew, and began to adroitly work upon the fears of the landlord by hints of the great danger of such an exhibition ; the latter immediately took the alarm, and, as Elliston had foreseen, forbade it. The announcements, however, were not withdrawn, and the public swallowed the hoax—what will it not swallow ? —and crowded the theatre. Without any reference being made to the great attraction of the night the performance proceeded until there gradually rose a cry, which soon swelled into a clamour, for the fireworks. Then Elliston came forward with a stately air ; he had made the most elaborate preparations, he said, for a grand pyrotechnic display, nothing had been left undone, but at the last moment came the reflection—what of the danger ? Of the number of young, tender girls, of respectable matrons, all collected to do him honour ? What if the theatre should take fire and be burned to the ground, the property, too, of one of the best and worthiest of men ? Here he appealed to the landlord—a most nervous person, who was sitting in the stage-box, and who shrank back into a corner—to publicly state if he had not for the safety of his property forbidden the display. The audience, thankful for the great ‘danger’ they had escaped, applauded him heartily. ‘But, ladies and gentlemen,’ he said, in conclusion, ‘I am happy to say I have made arrangements that will in some way make up for your disappointment—THE BAND’ (it consisted of three very vile fiddlers) ‘will strike up “God Save the King.” ’

His harangues were not always confined to the audience, they were sometimes inflicted upon his employés. Planché tells a good story of this habit. Planché had written a sort of speaking-pantomime for the Olympic, called ‘Little Red Riding Hood.’ On the first night everything went wrong in the mechanical department. When the performance was over, Elliston summoned all the carpenters and scene-

shifters on to the stage, in front of a cottage-scene, having a practicable door and window, ‘and,’ to use the narrator’s words, ‘standing in the centre, with his back to the foot-lights, harangued them in the most grandiloquent language — expatiating on the enormity of their offence, their ingratitude to the man whose bread they were eating, the disgrace they had brought upon the theatre, the cruel injury they had inflicted on the young and promising author by his side ; then, pointing in the most tragical attitude to his wife and daughters, who were in his box, he bade them look upon the family they had ruined, and burying his face in his handkerchief to stifle his sobs, passed slowly through the door of the scene, leaving his auditors silent, abashed, and somewhat affected, yet rather relieved by being let off with a lecture. The next minute the casement was thrown violently open, and thrusting in his head, his face all scarlet with fury, he roared out, “I discharge you all !” I feel my utter incapacity to convey an idea of this ludicrous scene, and I question whether anyone acquainted with the man, his voice, action, and wonderful facial expression, could thoroughly realise the glorious absurdity of it from verbal description.’

While manager at Birmingham he met, one day, Howard Payne, the ‘American Roscius,’ with whom he had formerly been intimate. Although pressed by a variety of business at the time, he was announced to play Richard the Third on the Wednesday, and was then proceeding to rehearsal. A sudden idea struck him ; he begged Payne, as a particular favour, to superintend the rehearsal for him, as he had a most important engagement. After some little persuasion the other consented to oblige. The instant they parted Elliston rushed away to the printer’s and ordered him to strike off three hundred bills announcing that Mr. Howard Payne, the American Roscius, having arrived in England, would have the honour of appearing on the following evening in his great impersonation of Richard the Third. By the time the rehearsal was over the bills were posted, and

Payne saw the town placarded with his name. His astonishment and rage may be imagined. He sought for Elliston, but he had departed for Leicester and would not return until the next night. At first he vowed he would not appear, but was at length mollified by the urgent entreaties of the actors, who represented to him the theatre would be closed if he persisted in his refusal, and by the thought that he would also offend the Birmingham public, whose patronage he might thereafter require. The house was crowded, and the performance a success : and by the time Elliston returned Payne's indignation had all evaporated.

In 1819 Elliston achieved his highest ambition ; he became lessee of Drury Lane. 'It was my fortune,' says Charles Lamb, 'to encounter him near St. Dunstan's Church on the morning of his election to that high office. Grasping my hand with a look of significance, he only uttered, "Have you heard the news?" then, with another look, following up the blow, he subjoined, "I am the future manager of Drury Lane Theatre!"' Breathless as he saw me, he stayed not for congratulation or reply, but mutely stalked away, leaving me to chew upon his new-blown dignities at leisure. In fact nothing could be said to it. Expressive silence alone could muse his praise. This was his *great style*.' He took Drury Lane at a rental of £10,200, all rates to be paid by him, with 635 free admissions, and a stipulation to spend £6,000 upon beautifying and repairs before the commencement of the second season. Among his company were to be found the following names: in tragedy, Kean, Pope, Holland, Powel, Mrs. West, Mrs. Egerton ; in comedy, himself, Downton, Munden, Keeley, Harley, Oxberry, Mrs. Glover, Miss Kelly, Mrs. Edwin, Mrs. Orger ; in opera, Braham. He opened to £638, and during a season of 199 nights took £44,053, or an average of £220 nightly.

Elliston still kept on his provincial establishments, even the little barn at Leamington, where he would occasionally perform, the company consisting of himself, one lady, a

couple of amateur tradesmen, and the doorkeeper's son. But he acted for all ; they had only to watch him, to come off and go on at his signal, while he spoke their parts and his own too, like the manager of a puppet-show. Not even the management of half a dozen and more theatres, Drury Lane among the number, however, could absorb the energies of Elliston. He started a 'Literary Association' at Bristol, purchasing the premises of a pickle-shop for £1,600. Here he collected old classics, black-letter volumes, antiquarian works, rare editions of choice books, fossils, shells, and other curiosities. There was a back parlour which he called the 'Lyceum,' and to which he invited all Bristolians of literary and refined taste. But nobody came, and the man whom he had put in charge absconded with the little cash that was taken. Soon afterwards he started a circulating library at Leamington Spa, and placed it under the direction of his two sons. The following amusing sketch of him in the character of shopman is taken from Raymond's 'Memoirs': 'One morning he descended early into his shop, and looking round with the irresistible humour of Tangent himself, "It is my cruel fate," said he, "that my children will be gentlemen." And on his sons making their appearance, they beheld their father, in an old dapple-grey frock-coat, dusting the books, arranging the ink-bottles, refiling the quires of *Bath Post*, and altering the position of the china mandarins with the veriest gravity in the world. One of the first customers that came in was a short, dirty-faced drab of a maid-servant, who brought some books to be exchanged ; and nearly at the same moment a snivelling charity-boy, with a large patch of diachylon across his nose, placed himself at the counter demanding other articles. "One at a time," said Octavian, with petrifying solemnity. "Now, madam?" "Missus 'as sent back these here and wants summat 'orrible." "The lady's name?" "Wivian." "With a V or a W?" asked Elliston with the same solemnity ; but the wench only grinned ; when up mounted Sir Edward

Mortimer, the ladder placed against the shelves, and withdrawing two wretchedly-torn volumes, clapped them together to liberate the dust, and placing them in the grubby claws of the now half-frightened girl, "There," said he, "a work of surpassing terror; and, I declare, the leaves not cut. And now, sir," to the boy, "I will attend to you." The lad, who by this time had nearly pulled the plaster from his nose, owing to the nervous state of agitation into which he had been thrown, could not at the precise moment recollect his mission; when Elliston repeated, with the intonation of a Merlin, "And now, sir, I will attend to *you*." "Half a quire o' outsides and three ha'porth of mixed wafers," screamed the urchin, throwing fourpence halfpenny upon the counter. "Outsides," repeated Elliston to his son William; "Mixed wafers," said he, in the same tone to Henry. Doricourt then demanded the paste-pot. Taking the brush, he first deliberately dabbed the lad's nose, thereby replacing the diachylon; and then seizing a watering-pot, much to the merriment of a few strangers who were by this time collected about the shop, began sprinkling the steps of the library door. Having played a few further antics, the "Great Lessee" retired to answer his numerous London correspondents on the stupendous affairs of Drury Lane.

Upon his return from America, Kean wrote to him, offering to take a short engagement at Drury Lane. In a few hours London was placarded with posters announcing the reappearance of the great actor on the following Monday. The manager resolved to celebrate his arrival by a street procession, of which Raymond gives a grotesque description: 'On the Monday, about noon, a special courier announced the progress of Kean towards the door of Drury Lane, and within a quarter of an hour the cavalcade was in sight. Six outriders in a motley costume of all the nations of the earth that do not go absolutely tattooed constituted the vanguard; then came Elliston himself in solitary grandeur in his own carriage, drawn by four greys. The hero of the

triumph next—Kean—likewise in his own carriage, supported by Russel and Hughes in cocked hats, drawn by four blacks. John Cooper followed, drawn also by four skewbalds or piebalds. A troop of horsemen formed the flank, composed of bruisers, jockeys, tavern-keepers, dog-fighters, and other friends of the drama; and the whole was brought up by the heterogeneous rabble which the progressive affair had, from pillar to post, enlisted in its service.' He celebrated the coronation of George IV. by a magnificent stage pageant, in which he reproduced all the features of the ceremony in a most gorgeous manner. He himself represented his Majesty. Amidst the tremendous applause which greeted the spectacle, he advanced with a most kindly air to the footlights, and, stretching forth his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven, uttered in a voice of the deepest solemnity the words, 'Bless ye, my people.' For the moment, he actually believed himself transformed into the real monarch. He had a medal struck for distribution among the audience, in imitation of the Sovereign. Upon the death of Queen Caroline a most extraordinary report was raised, that she had been poisoned by a cup of coffee presented her by Elliston during a visit to the theatre, in consequence of which he received a number of threatening letters from different persons. Some say the report was raised by himself, and indeed there is no eccentricity with which he might not be credited.

When it was proposed to raise a memorial to Shakespeare, some gentlemen of the Court called upon him to ascertain what he intended to do in the matter. After some conversation, he dismissed them with, 'His Majesty and I will talk over the matter together.' The following is a very good story, gathered from an unpublished letter of Peake's. There was a strong feud between the two great houses, and both were equally inimical to the managers of the Lyceum and the Haymarket, Arnold and Morris, who were trying to get the privileges of the patent houses abolished or

modified. Dr. Kitchener, who was a friend of all four, hit upon what he thought the splendid idea of effecting a general reconciliation, and, for this purpose, sent invitations to all four to dine with him on a certain evening, and inviting no other guests. The astonishment of the four rivals upon finding themselves thus ranged into a quartette may be imagined. After some embarrassment, they could not withstand the ludicrousness of the situation, and burst into a hearty laugh : they resolved to put a good face upon the matter, set aside mutual differences for that evening at least, and avoid all reference to theatrical affairs. This was exactly what Dr. Kitchener did not want, and at every pause he tried to introduce the topic he desired to be discussed, but for a time all his efforts were adroitly parried. At length, as the Doctor's wine began to tell upon Elliston's brain, he could no longer repress the dignity of the patent ; rising with an air of overwhelming hauteur, he put his hand upon Arnold's head, and exclaimed : 'Minor manager, I will lay my hand on you and crush you !' A roar of laughter greeted this sally, and put everyone in good humour for the rest of the evening.

But the end of all his greatness was coming fast ; in 1826 he shared the fate of most theatrical managers, and became a bankrupt ; dissipation and a course of wild speculation and extravagance, however, rather than failure of public patronage, were the causes of this catastrophe. But he was, at the same time, treated very harshly and very badly by the directors. During the seven years he leased Drury Lane, he had laid out £30,000 in improving the property, and paid £66,000 in rent ; all his liabilities amounted to only £5,500, and for this he offered to find security, but all compromise was refused. His last appearance at Drury Lane was in the character of Falstaff. He had studied the part with great diligence, his rehearsals had excited hopes of a great success among the friends who witnessed them ; the performance, however, did not quite realise their expectations. On the second night he

resolved to make yet greater efforts. He was labouring under extreme debility, but he ate little, and drank only one glass of Madeira. The first two acts were played with great vigour, but they exhausted his strength ; from that point he began to flag, and in the scene with the Prince in the fifth act he fell, in utter exhaustion, prostrate upon the stage. But all was not lost. Just at this time the Surrey, which he had given up, was in the market : and by the aid of friends he raised sufficient money to embark again in management. Fortune, which had always stuck to him with a constancy almost unique in that fickle deity, still smiled upon him, and he was successful. His great trump card was Jerrold's 'Black-eyed Susan,' by which he realised a large sum.

His last appearance upon any stage was on the 24th of June, 1831, in the character of Sheva in 'The Jew.' 'Black-eyed Susan' was performed for the two hundred and twenty-first time as the afterpiece ; on that night he played with greater effect than he had done for several years. At the end of the performance he made his customary speech, humorously imagining himself a *dibutant*. It was bold for so young a man as himself, he said, to address such an audience, but it would be ungrateful in him not to make some acknowledgement for the encouragement he had received ; he had appeared on that night as the immediate descendant of an old actor, one Mr. Elliston, who had for many years enjoyed the public favour, but who a few weeks before had judiciously

‘ Walk’d sober off, before a sprightlier age  
Came tittering on, to thrust him from the stage.’

On the 8th of July he expired. Almost his last words were characteristic. Within a few hours of his death he objected to take some medicine, and to induce him he was promised brandy-and-water to follow. ‘ A faint smile stole over his face, the old roguish light gleamed for a moment in his fast-glazing eyes, as he murmured, “ Bribery and corruption.” ’

‘ If,’ says Serjeant Talfourd, ‘ we might venture to suggest

one characteristic of Elliston's acting, as pervading the entire range of delightful images he embodied within our recollection, and distinguishing him from his contemporaries, we should refer to the perfection with which the elements of earnestness and gaiety were blended in his nature. Others have possessed each in a higher degree, or both, but as separate powers producing strong contrasts ; but no one ever so continually presented the brilliant and affecting tragico-comedy of life. . . . He was best of all when, amidst his sedateness, a bright twinkle of humour told you he was wiser than his gravity and could be merry when he pleased, or when wild mirth sprang out of deep feeling, and remorse enforced its lessons by hints of a frightful ecstasy. . . . His performance of Rover in "Wild Oats" was, perhaps, the most congenial with his nature of all his later representations ; it hit the happiest points between stern truth and delightful falsehood, and presented the liveliest picture of such a life as his own, catching in its course the colour of a myriad sentiments and modes of thought and being, but preserving a deep current of personal consciousness and enjoyment beneath all changes.'

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ELDER MATHEWS.

His birthplace and early associations—The schoolmaster of the old type—A backslider—Stage-struck—A Richard that would not be killed—A droll-looking lover—A touch of romance—The Botany Bay of actors—Engaged for the Haymarket—Birth of young Charles—Scott's companion to Kenilworth—His accident—'At Home'—Secession from the dramatic stage—Wonderful Mr. Pennymann—The green-room of the period—Godwin—His transformations—Imitations at Carlton House—As the Spanish ambassador—Visit to America—Embarrassments—As Sir Fretful Plagiary—His death—His eccentricities—*Début* of Young Charles.

DURING nearly eighty years the name of Charles Mathews was one of the foremost in our dramatic annals ; it was as

familiar to our fathers and grandfathers as it is to us, and the youth of this generation will carry into the next remembrances of 'the evergreen Charles' who still, at the age of seventy-three, remained the inimitable comedian. Not, however, with the younger but with the elder owner of the old familiar name has this chapter to do.

Charles Mathews the elder was born at No. 18, Strand, on the 28th of June, 1776. The house has long since disappeared; it stood in front of the old Hungerford Market, and consequently upon a part of the ground now occupied by the Charing Cross Railway Station. His father was what he calls 'a serious bookseller': that is to say, he dealt only in religious works, and was a very serious man, being minister of a Lady Huntingdon's Chapel at Whetstone. He and his wife appear, however, to have been very worthy personages, although surrounded by a horde of ignorant, hypocritical, and grasping fanatics. Mathews, in the fragment of autobiography which precedes his wife's 'Memoirs,' gives some laughable pictures of these ranters, and tells us that from eight to thirteen he was as gloomy a little bigot as any of them; that he listened with great satisfaction to the denunciations of perdition which made up their sermons, and devoutly hoped it might be the doom of everybody who differed from him and his fraternity. He tells us, in that same fragment, that his talent for mimicry was manifested at a very early age, that he 'had an irresistible impulse to echo, like the mocking-bird, every sound he heard.' His imitation of a noted street vendor of eels procured him such a thrashing, when he was about ten years of age, that he felt the effects of it for several weeks afterwards. After receiving the rudiments of education at St. Martin's Free School, he was removed to Merchant Taylors'. His description of the pedagogues of that establishment is almost as graphic as Lamb's picture of Christ Church about the same period. 'Bishop' the head-master, wore a huge powdered wig, larger than any other bishop's wig. It invited invasion, and w-

shot paper darts with such singular dexterity into the protruding bush behind, that it looked "like a fretful porcupine." He had chalkstone knuckles, too, which he used to rap on my head like a bag of marbles, and, eccentric as it may appear, pinching was his favourite amusement, which he brought to great perfection. There were six forms; I entered the school at the lowest, and got no higher than the fifth, but was, of course, alternately under the tuition of the four masters. Gardner, the lowest in grade, was the only mild person amongst them. Two more cruel tyrants than Bishop and Rose never existed. Lord, the fourth master, was rather an invalid, and, I believe, had been prescribed gentle exercise; he therefore put up for, and was the successful candidate for the flogging department. Rose was so great an adept at the cane, that I once saw a boy strip, after a thrashing from him, that he might expose his barbarous cruelty, when the back was actually striped with dark streaks like a zebra.'

Only the classical tongues were taught at Merchant Taylors', and he attended the French Classes held by the Madame Coterille, described in a previous chapter. It must be supposed that our hero's youthful fanaticism was wearing off, as, like Elliston, he joined her amateur performances, and was induced to sustain the part of Phoenix in Philips' 'Distressed Mother,' and in the next year the Chaplain in Otway's 'Orphan.' 'From that time, instead of reading "Brother Hill's Experience of his Sainted Sarah," or "The Last Moments of the Pawnbroker's Laundry Maid," or other such tracts, from my father's shelves, I selected the beauties of the living dramatists which nestled unheeded amongst the great mass of sermons and theological works. They heated my imagination, and, together with the lessons in the French nursery, gave me the most ardent desire to witness a play. On every occasion of my father's absence, instead of standing behind the counter, I mounted upon it, and with a round ruler for a truncheon, red ink for blood,

the kitchen-poker for a sword, and a towering goose-feather fixed on one side of my hat, turned up for the purpose, the skirt of my coat thrown gracefully over my left shoulder for a mantle, and a red tape garter encircling my knee, did I exhibit myself to the great edification of his apprentices. . . . I could scarcely walk the streets without offering my kingdom for a horse to every pedestrian I met. At night I could not rest, Macbeth did indeed murder sleep, and I recited Lear up three pairs of stairs to a four-legged bedstead.'

Private theatricals followed, as a matter of course ; these were given in a loft over a stable in Short's Gardens, Drury Lane, where, as it has been before mentioned, he met Charles Young. Afterwards he and a young gentleman, named Litchfield, paid £15 15s. to be allowed to act 'Richard the Third' at Richmond, and fought such a tremendous combat, in consequence of Richard, proud of his swordsmanship, declining to be killed, that the house became impatient, and loudly demanded the tyrant's death. His first regular engagement was at Dublin, where he had a very good taste of the miseries of the calling he had chosen. The manager was impecunious, and salaries were seldom forthcoming. More than once our aspirant passed a couple of days without food, but all the while studying with undiminished enthusiasm parts which he might never be called upon to play. He burned for low comedy, but was cast for walking gentleman. He was at the time a lanky boy of seventeen ; he had been subject to fits as an infant, and these had distorted his features. 'The off-side of my mouth took such an affection for my ear,' he says, 'that it seems to have made a perpetual struggle to form a closer communication with it ; and one eyebrow became fixed as a rusty weathercock, while the other popped an inch apparently beyond its proper position.' Lewis, the comedian, described him as the tallest man in the world (he was only five feet ten, however), and the funniest, with no regular mouth, but speaking from a little hole in the cheek ! Miss Farren came to star at Dublin, and he was

cast for her lover, a sentimental spoon, in the now-forgotten comedy of 'The Citizen.' For this part he describes himself as being dressed in a scarlet coat made for a man a head shorter than himself, the sleeves reaching only to within an inch of his wrists, a yellow embroidered waistcoat, a pair of black satin breeches, scarcely covering the knee, and showing a leg guiltless of calf ; powdered hair, tied in a queue, and a *chapeau bras* which he scarcely knew what to do with. When he came before the audience, there was a general shout as though a clown had made his appearance. 'Oh ! see the mopstick !' 'Ah, Pat, hould your breath, or you'll puff him off the stage.' 'Oh, the creethure ! what a slice of a man !' 'Arrah, where's your other half ? Why didn't ye bring it with you, my jewel ?' Such were a few of his greetings from the gallery. When he made his exit, he was followed by a universal 'Whoo !' Then a voice cried out, 'A groan for the long lobster ?' which was given with great emphasis.

His next engagement was at Swansea, where he met his first wife. There was a touch of romance in this marriage. The young lady was a Miss Strong, the daughter of an Exeter physician, who, at his death, had left his family in embarrassed circumstances. She was at the time supporting herself by keeping a school. They met at the house of a mutual friend, and became acquainted. One day he paid her a visit, and, in a moment of confidence, she told him her history ; the sadness of the story and the loneliness of her situation so affected him, that in the impulse of the moment, without ever having experienced any affection for her, he offered to make her his wife ; she accepted him. When calm reflection came, his matrimonial prospects looked anything but exhilarating ; his weekly salary was the munificent sum of 12s., with a benefit chance—a somewhat small income to take a wife upon. However, he was too much a gentleman to retract, and in a very short time Miss Strong became Mrs. Mathews. She had a taste for literature, and endeavoured to add to their scanty means by her pen ; at

first she concealed this occupation from her husband, working when he was absent or asleep, hoping to give him an agreeable surprise. She wrote two or three novels of the sickly sentimental type then prevalent ; they were published, but the remuneration was insignificantly small. This sedentary labour preyed upon a constitution naturally delicate, and threw her into a consumption. In the company in which Mathews was then acting was a young lady for whom his wife had formed a great attachment ; on her death-bed she implored him to take her for his second wife ; and, although the bride thus strangely selected at first declared such a match to be impossible, before a twelvemonth had elapsed she fulfilled the wish of her dying friend, and became the second Mrs. Mathews. This, however, was in 1802, and we have arrived only as far as 1797 at present.

Upon leaving Swansea he joined Tate Wilkinson, under whom his salary rose to £1 a week ! Yet it was a great step in his profession, both as regarded money and position, for the York circuit stood high among provincial theatres. His first reception was not encouraging. ‘Ugh, what a maypole !’ exclaimed Tate. ‘Sir, you are too tall for low comedy. I never saw anything so thin to be *alive*. Why, sir, one hiss would blow you off the stage !’ He ended by advising him to return to his father and ‘an honest trade,’ and it was with difficulty he could be prevailed upon to give him a trial. The prejudice was formed, however, and was not easy to overcome. After seeing him play one or two parts, he engaged another comedian, and cast him for very inferior business. This drew forth a remonstrance from the young aspirant, which was answered by a quaint and characteristic letter of Wilkinson’s, in which he averred that ‘misfortune’ placed an insurmountable barrier to the possibility of his ever being capable of sustaining the first line of comic business. Before very long, however, he had to recall his judgment, which he did in a very handsome manner, by apologising upon the stage before the whole

company, and raising his salary 5s. a week. ‘When I came here,’ writes Mathews to his friend Litchfield, ‘Wilkinson thought I should never make an actor; certainly he saw me frequently to disadvantage. Now he is proud of reading his recantation. He told Mrs. Chapman that I was the most promising young man he ever remembers to have had, the most perfect and attentive to dress, and the greatest favourite he has had for many years, particularly in York. He told Stephen Kemble, who played here four nights, and values himself much on Falstaff, that I played it better—that he wanted humour. I have had the second-best benefit here (York), £96 15s.’

The circuit consisted of York, Leeds, Hull, Wakefield, Pontefract, and Doncaster. Leeds was at this time, he tells us, considered little better than the Botany Bay of actors: ‘The extraordinary, nay, frightful, prejudice cherished by the people made this periodical stay among them a matter of serious dread, especially to the females of the theatre. It appeared as if even the lives of the performers were held in no consideration among a certain portion of the natives, whose estimation of “lakers” seemed to agree with ours in relation to the most insignificant animals created for our use. These people carried their opinions still farther, for they deemed it no sin to torture or even destroy any of the profession. If an actress had occasion to cross a certain bridge at a period of the day when the croppers were sunning themselves; in other words, taking their lounge between their working hours, she was obliged to provide herself with an escort to protect her from the rough jokes and assaults of even the most gallant, whose kindness was as much dreaded as their brutalities.’ He relates several anecdotes of this persecution. Mr. Holman, preferring to dress for the performance at home, was one night, attired as Lord Townley, being conveyed over the bridge in a sedan-chair, when the novelty of the vehicle attracted the attention of the loungers; they stopped it, and insisted upon seeing who was inside.

'A mon wi' his face painted ! It's a laker !' was the cry, followed by another of 'Toss him o'er t' brig.' And, but for the timely appearance of several gentlemen who interfered, they would have carried their threat into execution. But, as the actor was being carried away, he heard one of the ruffians growl, 'Well, I'm vexed we didn't topple him into t' water. Where'd been t' harm i' drowning a laker ?' On another occasion, a young actress, dressed in the prevailing fashion of the day—scanty petticoats, and very little of them—was walking by the side of the canal, when she was suddenly caught up in the arms of 'an enormous man-monster, of a stone-blue colour from head to foot, dress and complexion,' who declared he 'wad na' gi' her till she told him wha she was wi' sooch few claithes on.' She told him she belonged to the theatre. 'Ah, a laker ! here, here ! come hither ! I tell thee aw've gotten a laker !' he shouted to his companions, who were dressing cloth at a distance. All left their occupation, and came running towards the unfortunate girl with as much excitement as though she had been some rare monster. Then, after grossly insulting her, they enveloped her in sheets of wet brown paper, which they were using in their business, until she looked like a mummy, and drove her towards the town, chasing her with savage yells of delight, until she was met by some human beings who rescued her. At Pontefract, Doncaster, and Hull, on the contrary, to be a 'laker' was to everywhere insure a welcome.

Mathews's rise was now rapid, and the fame of his talents reached London. Colman engaged him for the Haymarket at £10 per week and benefit terms. He made his first appearance on the London stage on the 15th of May, 1802, as Jabel in Cumberland's play of 'The Jew,' and Lingo in O'Keefe's 'Agreeable Surprise.' His success was immediate and unqualified, both with the press and the public. Prosperity is apt to be prosy ; the man who has no trouble to gain his daily bread, and who pays punctually his rent and

taxes, is seldom interesting in a literary point of view. This is especially the case with actors ; in their struggling days, when they have to resort to a thousand shifts to gain food and shelter, and their whole existence is a *contretemps*, they are the most delightful people to read about ; but settled prosperously in a London engagement—why, you might almost as well attempt to extract amusement out of the life of an alderman.

The birth of his son Charles, afterwards the famous actor of genteel comedy, took place in Liverpool, where the elder Mathews was fulfilling an engagement after the Haymarket season, in December, 1803. In the next year, our comedian was engaged at Drury Lane to supply Suett's place during an illness. For several years he alternated between Drury Lane, the Haymarket, and provincial starring engagements ; growing in fame and position, mixing in the best society, courted, sought after, lionised. He was an especial favourite and personal friend of Scott's, and could boast of being the companion of his first visit to the ruins of Kenilworth. It was in 1814, while in company with Terry the actor, Scott's friend and *protégé*, that he was thrown from a tilbury ; the accident, which was a serious one, produced a long illness and a life-long lameness. Mrs. Mathews relates how he amused himself during his long confinement with his violin, welcoming his friends with the scrape of a blind fiddler, and how he mastered the mysteries of a jew's harp and a penny trumpet, becoming a proficient performer on both.

In 1818, he commenced at the Lyceum Theatre that marvellous entertainment with which his name is more especially associated, and in which, during the following sixteen years, he delighted England and America by the exhibition of such powers of mimicry and personation as have never been equalled before or since. The cause of his secession from the dramatic stage he gave in his opening address : 'I have been frequently urged by my friends to attempt an entertainment by myself, and reminded with what

success the celebrated Dibdin had, during several winters, kept audiences together by his single exertions. Still I preferred the exercise of my profession as a member of the national theatre ; and could I have been indulged in the first wish of my heart, that of frequently appearing before you in the characters of legitimate comedy, in that capacity I should probably have remained to the end of my days, without ever attempting to exhibit that little knack for distinct mimicry to which I have since unfortunately been exclusively doomed. . . . The Press, perhaps unconsciously, took its tone from the managers ; and a part (I do not say the whole, for I should be ungrateful if I did), but a part fell into the habit of designing me as a mere mimic.' The first announcement ran as follows : 'The public are respectfully informed that Mr. Mathews will be At Home at the English Opera House on the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, and 11th of April. Particulars of the Entertainment, to which the public are invited, will be duly announced.' He engaged himself to Arnold, the manager of the Lyceum, for seven years at a salary of £1,000 per year. The success of the entertainment far exceeded the most sanguine expectations, and Mathews soon repented of his bargain. Mrs. Mathews, in her biography, animadverted against it so strongly as to draw forth a pamphlet from Arnold, who defended himself on the plea that, independent of the salary, he undertook a risk of £3,500 a year for expenses upon an untried speculation, the failure of which would have been most disastrous to him, and that therefore it was but right he should reap the greater share of the advantages. Modifications, however, were afterwards made which enabled Mathews to clear large sums by his provincial tours.

Mrs. Mathews relates some extraordinary anecdotes of her husband's powers of personation off the stage. By mere mobility of features he could, without change of dress, assume a character so completely as to deceive his most intimate friends ; to this personage he gave the name of Mr. Penny-

man, and once he was expelled from behind the scenes of the Liverpool Theatre, where he was acting at the time, as an intrusive stranger. More than once he played off the same trick in the green-room of Drury Lane amidst his brother actors, without his identity being suspected. Indeed, the eccentricities of this supposititious gentleman became so celebrated, that one night the Duchess of Devonshire came from her box into the green-room to have a peep at him. He sat down beside her, entered into conversation, complimented her upon her beauty, while she was all the time convulsed with laughter. No one knew who he was or whence he came, but as the *habitués* of the theatre had the *entrée* of the green-room at that time, a stranger more or less was not remarkable. As no gentleman, unless he was performing in the play, was permitted to enter the green-room except in evening-dress, the costume afforded no clue to his detection.\* ‘No one,’ to continue in the writer’s words, ‘could tell how the gentleman got admittance, and therefore there was no mode of excluding him. Every night he attracted inconvenient numbers to the green-room; and on the nights when my husband performed, it was a matter of much regret to the performers that “Mathews always came to the theatre too early or too late to see a subject whom he of all others ought to see.” It was really surprising that no suspicion arose of the truth. How long this imposture

\* ‘The first green-room,’ says Planché (*‘Reminiscences’*)—‘for there was a second in those days, for the ballets and chorus, besides a room for “supers”—the first green-room of either of the great Theatres Royal at the time of my introduction to them, was certainly one of the most delightful resorts in London, combining the elegance and courtesy of fashionable life with all the wit, mirth, and admirable fooling to be found in literary, theatrical, and artistic circles. Presided over by men of liberal education, accustomed to the highest society, however great the fun, it never degenerated into coarseness, nor passed the bounds of good breeding. No visitor was allowed to enter who was not in full evening dress. Even the actors were excluded if they were in boots, unless when attired in their stage habiliments. The principal ladies had each her page waiting in the corridor to pick up her train as she issued from the green-room, and bear it to the wing, or other point of entrance on the stage.’

lasted I forgot, but it was at length revealed by the impostor himself. One night, in the midst of a greater excitement than was usually created by him, he suddenly stood before the assembled crowd as Mr. Mathews. A set of village clowns, or a group of children gazing at a mountebank at a fair, could not have expressed more wonder, nay, something approaching to terror, when the imperceptible change took place, than was manifested in the features of all around.'

When Godwin was writing '*Cloudesly*' he sent Mathews the following letter : ' My dear Sir,—I am at this moment engaged in writing a work of fiction, a part of the incidents of which will consist in escapes in disguises. It has forcibly struck me that if I could be indulged in the pleasure of half an hour's conversation with you upon the subject it would furnish me with some hints, etc.' A day was appointed for him to dine at Mathews's house, and the great mimic gave him several ocular demonstrations of the possibilities of disguise. By-and-by, while Godwin was wrapt 'in the wonder on't,' Mathews left the room, and almost immediately afterwards there entered an eccentric gentleman, a neighbour. ' We were embarrassed,' to continue in Mrs. Mathews's words, ' and Mr. Godwin evidently vexed at the interruption. However, there was no help for it; the servant had admitted him, and he was introduced in form to Mr. Godwin. The moment Mr. Jenkins, for such was his name, discovered the distinguished person he had dropped in upon, he was enthusiastically pleased at the event, talked to Mr. Godwin about all his works, inquired about the forthcoming book—in fact, bored him through and through. At last the author turned to my husband for refuge, and discovered that he had left the room. He therefore rose from his seat and approached the window leading to the lawn, Mr. Jenkins officiously following, and insisting upon opening it for him; and while he was urging a provokingly obstinate lock, the object of his devoted attention waited behind him for release. The casement at length flew open, and Mr. Godwin, passing

the gentleman with a devoted look of thanks, found to his astonishment that Mr. Jenkins had disappeared, and that Mr. Mathews stood in his place.'

In 'Love, Law, and Physic,' in the part of Lubin Log, he had to give a description of a trial. When he came to the summing-up, he assumed a marvellous imitation of Lord Ellenborough's manner; the effect upon the audience was so great, and the applause so overpowering, that he was quite disconcerted. The next day a nobleman waited upon him with a polite request that it should not be repeated. Unlike Foote, Mathews was very averse to give personal offence, and promised not to do so. The next evening the house was crowded, and all the audience on tiptoe of expectation for the *bonne bouche*. The address, however, being given in quite a different style, there arose a clamour and cries of 'Imitation.' For a time the actor took no notice of the demand, until the cries for an explanation—for the impression was that it had been forbidden by a superior authority—became so loud that it was impossible to disregard them. He then signified that his speech upon the previous night having given much offence, he was determined not to repeat it, but that he would, if they sanctioned the experiment, give the speech in question in various tones and differences of style, which would enable them to point out which they preferred. He then proceeded to deliver the charge in imitation of Kemble, Cooke, Incledon, Suett, Munden, and Blanchard. Soon afterwards he received a request to visit Carlton House; upon arriving there he was ushered into the presence of the Prince and the Duke of York, and about twenty ladies and gentlemen. The Prince desired him to give the imitation of Ellenborough, of which he had heard so much. Of course, although reluctantly, he was compelled to comply. The Prince was in raptures, shutting his eyes while he listened in intense enjoyment, and exclaiming, 'Excellent! perfect! it is he himself.' He afterwards received another request to visit Carlton House, to entertain

the Court with some specimens of his ‘rare talent,’ and was treated by the Regent not only graciously but cordially. Very droll is Angelo’s description of Mathews imitating fireworks: ‘After tucking up his coat, he began gently turning round, whirling and hissing, and as the changes took place he made a pop with his hands, sometimes extending his arms, at others placing them akimbo, wheeling round on one leg whilst kicking out with the other, with different imitations of sound.’

This was the age of hoaxes and practical jokes, and in his youthful days Mathews perpetrated a hoax almost as daring as Hook’s Berners Street affair. He and some friends were in the habit in summer of making pleasure-trips to different places near London. At the time of the excitement about Ferdinand of Spain it occurred to them that Mathews should take an excursion as the Spanish Ambassador. His ‘suite’ was disposed in two carriages; Hill, the proprietor of the *Monthly Mirror*, acted the part of interpreter. They halted at Woolwich, where his ‘Excellency’ sallied out on foot to view the place; he was dressed in a bright green frock-coat, covered with ribbons and orders, and wore an enormous cocked hat with ‘Viva Ferdinand’ stamped in gold letters upon a purple ribbon; he went into shops, bought various articles, speaking a wonderful jargon, which his interpreter translated. By-and-by there came a message from the Arsenal, that it was open to his Excellency’s inspection, and that all the *employés* were at his command, an offer of which the party had the impudence to avail themselves. At the inn, where they dined, the scene was most ludicrous; the landlord and his satellites were tricked out in their best, the whole neighbourhood was ransacked for plate to adorn the table. The interpreter informed the landlord that his Excellency required everything in great profusion—vast numbers of spoons, forks, and plates. His bedchamber was an illumination of wax candles, and twelve dozen towels were placed for his use. Everything he did and required was the reverse

of ordinary rules. Next morning they went for a water excursion on board a fishing-boat. The master was greatly astonished by the doings of his distinguished passenger. Amongst various other refreshments he was shown a large can of lamp-oil for his Excellency's exclusive drinking, and was equally disgusted when he saw him devour what he believed to be a candle-end, but which was really only a piece of apple cut into that form, and wash it down with what he was told was a glass of lamp-oil.

In 1822-3 he visited America with his 'At Home,' and his success was as great as it had been in England. Upon his return, he appeared at Drury Lane, for the first time for six years as an actor. In 1827 he again played there, receiving the highest terms, so his wife informs us, that up to that time had been paid to any comic actor. The next year he became Yates's partner at the Adelphi. In 1829 the 'At Home' was transferred to that house, Yates assisting in the personations. Notwithstanding his success, and the large amount of money he made, his circumstances seem to have been not at all prosperous during his latter years; he had embarked in several speculations, all of which failed, and swept away fortune with them, obliging him to give up his house in Milfield Lane, Highgate, West Hill,\* 'their earthly paradise,' as Mrs. Mathews styles it. This was a great blow to him. But a yet greater was the sale of his magnificent collection of theatrical portraits, some four hundred in number, which he had accumulated at great cost; the greater part now adorns the walls of the Garrick Club. In 1834 he paid a second visit to America, where, notwithstanding a factious opposition, attempted against him on account of his ridicule of national peculiarities in one of his London entertainments, he was as successful as ever. From the time of his accident he had been a great sufferer from lameness, and his health

\* The house is still standing, though it has been altered into a pretentious Tudoresque building, from the ponds, however, a glimpse of the older part may still be obtained.

had been gradually failing for several years. Upon his return from the United States it broke down altogether. He died in Plymouth on his fifty-ninth birthday—that is to say, on the 28th of June, 1835—and was buried in St. Andrew's Church, in that town.

In regard to the merits of his acting, we cannot do better than quote Leigh Hunt's description of his performance of Sir Fretful Plagiary in '*The Critic*': 'We are generally satisfied when an actor can express a single feeling with strength of countenance ; but to express two at once, and to give them at the same time a powerful distinctness, belongs to the perfection of his art. Nothing can be more admirable than the look of Mr. Mathews when the severe criticism is detailed by his malicious acquaintance. While he affects a pleasantry of countenance, he cannot help betraying his rage in his eyes, in that feature which always betrays our most predominant feeling ; if he draws the air to and fro between his teeth, as if he was perfectly assured of his own pleasant feelings, he convinces everybody by his tremulous and restless limbs that he is in absolute torture ; if the lower part of his face expands into a painful smile, the upper contracts into a glaring frown which contradicts the ineffectual good-humour beneath ; everything in his face becomes rigid, confused, and uneasy ; it is a mixture of oil and vinegar, in which the acid predominates ; it is anger putting on a mask that is only the more hideous in proportion as it is more fantastic. The sudden drop of his smile into a deep and bitter indignation, when he can endure sarcasm no longer, completes this impassioned picture of Sir Fretful ; but, lest his indignation should swell into mere tragedy, Mr. Mathews accompanies it with all the touches of familiar vexation ; while he is venting his rage in vehement expressions, he accompanies his more emphatic words with a closing thrust of his buttons, which he fastens and unfastens up and down his coat ; and when his obnoxious friend approaches his snuff-box to take a pinch, he claps down the lid, and turns violently

off, with a most malicious grin of mockery.' The same admirable critic descants also upon his fine personations of age : ' Mathews never appears to wish to be old ; time seems to have come to him, not he to time ; and as he never, where he can avoid it, makes that show of feebleness which the vanity of age always would avoid, so he never forgets that general appearance of years which the natural feebleness of age could not help.'

Coleridge, who was a frequent visitor at Ivy Cottage, and was very fond of Mathews, called him a comic poet, acting his own poems.

Among his other abilities was a prodigious memory. He could play a part after fifteen years without looking at the book, and during the sixteen years he gave the 'At Homes,' he never had a prompter or used a single memorandum for the night's entertainment.

His temperament was exceedingly restless and irritable, and his eccentricities were very notable. Although so full of wit and drollery in company, in private life he was intensely melancholy, and suffered at times under such depression of spirits that it was necessary to put away his razors, lest he should commit suicide. He was so fond of light, that he could not endure a blind to be lowered on the most blazing summer's day, and when he went out to dine, he always carried a pair of silver snuffers in his pocket to trim the candles with. If he saw a picture hung crooked in a strange house, he could not rest until he had adjusted it. He could not endure the touch of money, he said it made his flesh 'goosey.' He would fall into a frantic passion if a housemaid removed a pair of dirty stockings, which he had thrown down in the middle of his bed-room as a remembrancer, as people tie cotton round their fingers. Having an appointment at a city tavern one day, he was shown into the commercial room, where a traveller was regaling himself upon boiled beef. Casting his eyes upon the table, he observed that the man was not using mustard : this put him

into a fidget. He took up a newspaper and tried to read, but spite of him his eyes would wander in the direction of that mustardless plate. At length he could endure it no longer. ‘I beg your pardon, sir,’ he said in his mildest accents, ‘I don’t think you are aware that you have no mustard?’ The man stared, nodded, and went on with his meal. Mathews again took up the newspaper; but again the abnormal sight irritated him beyond endurance, and advancing to the table and slapping it with his hand, he called out sharply, ‘Are—you—aware,—sir, that you are eating beef without mustard?’ Again the man stared without deigning a reply. This was more than Mathews could stand. Rushing to the side-board, he snatched up a mustard pot, and clapped it down in front of him with, ‘By —, you SHALL take mustard!’ But he did not, and Mathews in a towering passion summoned the waiter, and desired to be shown into another room, remarking that he had never been in the company of such a disgusting savage before, and that he was quite sick at the revolting sight. Like all mimics, he could not endure the thought of being imitated himself. He was shy, too, and had a morbid dislike to be lionised, or in any way rendered conspicuous. He was very fond of animals; if he found any straying about at night, he would give them a shelter. A curious story of this love is told in some ‘Reminiscences;’ we give it in the writer’s own words: ‘I happened to be in Bath once when he was giving his “At Home” there. As we were walking along one of the principal streets one morning, a noble Newfoundland dog was sitting sedately bolt upright at a door we had to pass. As soon as we got opposite the dog, Mathews stopped short, went to the edge of the pavement, took off his hat, made a low bow to the evidently astonished animal, and then passed on without saying a word. “Do you know him?” said I, “that you salute him in that fashion?” “No,” he replied; “but I have a profound respect for a dog like that, and I generally show it in the way you have seen.”’

His friend Wightwick, writing of his private character, says : 'I knew him as a man ; you, perhaps, only as an actor. I had opportunities of observing his scrupulous integrity ; his affectionate and grateful attachment to those who loved him ; his forgiving generosity towards those who had wronged him ; and, more than all, his Christian resignation when threatened by the death which has since laid him low. And now, adieu for ever ! Adieu, Charles Mathews ! For the many hours of innocent and instructive amusement thou hast afforded, we proffer our gratitude ; for thy purity of mind and unsullied integrity, our admiration ; for thy warmth of heart, our love ; for thy loss, our deep sorrow.'

In the December of the year of his father's death, young Charles made his first bow to the public at the Olympic, with Liston, in the 'Old and Young Stager,' written for the occasion by Leman Rede, and in a piece of his own composition, entitled 'The Hunchbacked Lover.' It had been the wish of his father that he should take to the stage, as he believed that he had great abilities for that calling. How prescient was that belief is known to all playgoers, who still mourn the loss of that most inimitable of light comedians.

---

## CHAPTER V.

### SOME MORE FAMOUS COMEDIANS.

Joseph Munden—His 'Faces'—Early shifts and poverty—Penuriousness—Downton—John Emery—As Tyke—Two rustics—John Liston—Lack of comic power in his early years—An usher—Love of tragic parts—As Octavian and Romeo—Melancholy last days—The man of one story and the Persian ambassador—The man who did not like tripe—Love of fun among the old actors—'Little Knight'—John Fawcett—Oxberry—Bartley—Willie Blanchard—Harley—Farren.

THERE is something rich and unctuous in the very sound of the name MUNDEN. Some critics of his time severely cen-

sure his love of grimace ; and there is no doubt that his style had a breadth which frequently degenerated into exaggeration. But, according to Elia—and what authority can weigh against his upon such a subject?—he must have been a marvellous comedian. ‘There is one face of Farley, one face of Knight, one (and what a one it is) of Liston ; but Munden has none that you can properly pin down, and call *his*. When you think he has exhausted his battery of looks, in unaccountable warfare with your gravity, suddenly he sprouts out an entirely new set of features. Like Hydra, he is not one, but legion ; not so much a comedian as a company. If his name could be multiplied like his countenance, it might fill a play-bill. He, and he alone, literally *makes faces*—applied to any other person the phrase is a mere figure, denoting certain modifications of the human countenance. Out of some invisible wardrobe he dips for faces as his friend Suett used for wigs, and fetches them out as easily.’ Yet another writer tells us that his features had no singularity, but in repose were as sedate as those of a merchant or a baronet, though at his will they could assume the most fantastic forms. ‘Any one of his hundred faces might have served as the model of a mask for the old Greek comedy ; and looked as immovable while it lasted.’ He had wonderful skill in portraying drunkenness. ‘We have seen him,’ says Boaden, ‘play three drunken parts in a night, and come out fresh in them all : and such was his practical discrimination that we could not have transferred a tone or a stagger without injury to the inebriate sarcasms of Crack, the maudlin philanthropy of Nipperton, or the sublime stupidity of Doxey.’ Those who witnessed Mr. Webster’s performance of Richard Pride, in the drama of ‘Janet Pride,’ some five-and-twenty years ago, in each act of which he was in a different state of drunkenness, may realise something of this description.

Munden, born in 1758, was the son of a poulticer and pork-butcher in Brookes’ Market, Leather Lane. He began

life in an apothecary's shop, then entered an attorney's office as clerk. But constant visits to the theatre fired him with an ambition that soared above his three-legged stool, so he left home and joined a strolling company. Few men had more bitter experience of a country-player's life than Joseph Munden : starvation was his chronic condition. Once he was driven to such extremity that he prevailed upon a militia man, whom he met upon the road, to take him to the inn at which he was billeted, pass him off for a comrade, and so procure him a supper and a bed. For this favour it was expected that he would enrol himself in the regiment, but early the next morning Joseph was *non est inventus*. After a time he was starved out of the profession and returned to his stool. But while its trials were forgotten its glamour would not let him rest, and again, after two years, pen and parchment were renounced for the sock and buskin. Step by step he now fought his way up the difficult path he had chosen, until he made his first appearance at Covent Garden, in 1790, as Sir Francis Gripe and Jemmy Jumps, and, although the latter was one of Edwin's most famous parts, he scored a decided success. Old Dornton in 'The Road to Ruin' was his first great original part, and it at once raised him to the first rank of comedians. His last appearance was in 1824. He had always been penurious in his habits ; but in his latter years, although possessed of ample means, he deprived himself almost of the necessities of life. He died in 1832, and is buried in St. George's, Bloomsbury.

DOWTON was born in Exeter, in 1766. He was intended for an architect. He made his London *début* at Drury Lane in 1795 as Sheva in 'The Jew.' Leigh Hunt pronounced him one of the finest comic geniuses the stage ever produced. He never resorted to trickery or grimace to gain applause : he was a thorough artist, who followed the tradition of the Garrick school, and approached very near to King in versatility. Planché says he was the best Falstaff he had ever seen.

JOHN EMERY, the greatest of stage countrymen, was equally at home in every species of rustic—the serious, the comic, the tragico-comic ; his powers of discrimination in these characters were wonderful. In Tyke ('The School of Reform') 'he astonished the town,' says Leigh Hunt, 'by a display of feeling and passion almost amounting to the most thrilling tragedy. . . . It is in the scene where he describes the agony of his old father, as he stood upon the beach to witness his son's transportation, that he surprised us with this tragic originality. His description of their last adieu, of his parent kneeling to bless him just as the vessel was moving, of his own despair, the blood that seemed to burst from his eyes, and his fall of senselessness to the ground, was given with so unexpected an elevation of manner, so wild an air of wretchedness, and with action of such pitiable self-abhorrence, that, in spite of his country dialect, which he still very naturally preserved, and the utter vulgarity of his personal appearance, the audience on the first night were electrified for the moment with the truest terror and pity. His haggard demeanour and outcry of despair live before me at this instant.' The same fine critic also highly praises his Caliban : 'In this character he again approaches to terrific tragedy, when he describes the various tortures inflicted on him by the magician and the surrounding snakes, that "stare and kiss him into madness." This idea, which is truly the "fine fancy" of the poet, is brought before the spectators with all the loathing and violence of desperate wretchedness.' Emery was a native of Durham, although he was brought up in Yorkshire. 'He was so perfect a representative of the loutish cunning of the three Ridings,' says Boaden, 'that it was difficult to believe that he had, or could have, any personal or mental qualities to discriminate the man from the actor. His rustics were not stage personations ; look, action, manner, dress, speech, were all of the very persons he represented. He was a musician, a draughtsman, and painted skilfully in oil. At twelve years old he

played the violin in the Brighton orchestra, but soon exchanged that for the boards. When only fifteen, he was admirable in his delineation of old age, and Tate Wilkinson spoke of him then as a 'great' actor. In 1797, when only twenty years old, Harris engaged him for three years, to supply Quick's place. He died rather suddenly in 1822. Much of his talent descended to that son who has only recently passed away. 'If our two stage rustics,' writes Leigh Hunt, 'Emery and Liston, are compared, it will be found that the former is more skilled in the habits and cunning of rusticity, and the latter in its simplicity and ignorance. Emery has appropriated to himself the dialects and the personal peculiarities of countrymen; Liston is the rustic merely because nothing so ignorant and so gaping is ever discovered in town. Emery excels in vain insolence, in the fatigue of comprehending another, and in the meditation of a cunning answer; Liston in the apparent inability to object, in a hopelessness of perception, and in the fatuity of mere astonishment. Their expression of vanity is in proportion to their expression of ignorance; what is the affectation of superiority in Emery, becomes an important self-conviction in Liston. Emery, full of whim and artifice, is the countryman who has associated with the geniuses of inns, and has preserved his rusticity and his ignorance after acquiring a contempt for both; Liston is the confirmed, inexperienced, and stupid bumpkin, with all the prejudices of unvaried locality, and with not even sufficient intelligence to imbibe the manner and eccentricities of his neighbours. Upon the whole, Liston is more dry in his humour, more effective with a little exertion and upon inefficient subjects, and altogether more unaffected; but the greater genius must certainly be allowed to Emery, who exhibits a more discriminative minuteness and variety of expression, and who excels at once in the habits and the passions of the country.'

Mathews' successor at York was '*a* Mr. LISTON, who soon afterwards became *the* Mr. Liston.' Strange to say, he

made little or no impression there ; Mathews, who played with him before his departure, tells us that he never once made him smile, and that when Colman, at the time he was negotiating with Liston for the Haymarket, asked him for an opinion, he felt very embarrassed, and could only reply that he was a very gentlemanlike young man, of whom he had not seen enough to be a judge of his powers. ‘ What little we know of Mr. Liston,’ writes Mrs. Mathews, ‘ impressed us with the notion of his inveterate gravity, both on and off the stage. On the night of his first appearance (1805), therefore, when he played Sheepface to Mr. Mathews’ Scout, in “The Village Lawyer,” his acting in the first scene took my husband by surprise, and so convulsed him with laughter, that he was scarcely able to utter a word of his own character intelligibly while he was on the stage with him.’

JOHN LISTON was born in 1777, and in his early youth was usher at St. Martin’s School, in Castle Street, Leicester Square. But the footlights lured him from desk and stool, and believing himself born to represent dramatic heroes, he joined a strolling company as a tragedian. As might be expected, he was not very successful in that line, and, disgusted with his adopted profession he endeavoured to obtain the situation of clerk in a printing-office. Happily his negotiations failed. We next find him at Dublin, and then at Newcastle, under Stephen Kemble, still playing tragedy. It was the last-named manager who, discovering the true bent of his genius, first cast him for comedy parts and made his fortune. But he never wholly cast off his first love, and never could entirely divest himself of the idea that it was the true one. Long after he had taken his position as one of the greatest comic geniuses of his time, when only the sight of his face was enough to set the house in a roar, he would occasionally play a tragic part for his benefit, such as Octavian, and once he performed Romeo ! Like Suett, he was a martyr to a nervous complaint, and the cause in both

was probably identical, since we have heard from those who knew him, that he would drink a bottle of brandy during a night's performance. He did not act after the season of 1836-7. His sole occupation during the last years of his life was to stand at a window of his house, which faced Hyde Park Corner, and, watch in hand, time the omnibuses as they passed ; if any happened to be a little late, he would be in great distress. Finally, his spirits wholly forsook him, and he fell into a lethargic condition. He died in 1846.

Liston was the first comic actor whose salary exceeded that paid to tragedians. Boaden says he could not define his power. ‘He must be seen to be comprehended. Other actors labour to be comic ; I see nothing like labour or system in Liston. In person, he is stately and even grave in expression. . . . He does not concur in any general effect—he is *alone*, as well when with others on the scene as when he enters to soliloquize, or rather enjoy *himself* with the audience.’ I have given some anecdotes of the extraordinary fondness for practical jokes which prevailed at this period, in Mathews' life ; there is a capital story of this kind related of Liston. At the Theatrical Fund dinners, which were not the portentous affairs they are nowadays, but really convivial gatherings, a constant attendant was an old gentleman who was famous for one story ; this it was the delight of certain choice spirits to make him repeat over and over again, and then question him upon the several points, pretending they did not quite understand them. Sometimes Simmons and Munden would get up arguments, pretend to quarrel and fight across the table, upon which the old gentleman, to settle the dispute, was called upon to repeat the same eternal story, perhaps for the tenth time, which he would do, quite innocent of the joke. Once Liston slipped out of the room unobserved, and tricked himself and one or two others out in Oriental costume. Then entered one of the masquers to announce that the Persian Ambassador, having been told of this wonderful story, was desirous of hearing it from the

narrator's own lips. The victim was delighted, and his Excellency was requested to enter. Then appeared Liston, preceded by salaaming attendants, attired in silk and paste diamonds, with beard and wig, and presenting a figure of most comical and ferocious dignity. The old gentleman once more told his story, to which the mock ambassador listened with the most solemn attention, while all round the table were almost bursting with suppressed laughter. When it was done, his Excellency, through his interpreter, expressed his gratification and thanks, and then departed. Stripping off his disguise, Liston returned to the room and was told of the distinguished visitor who had just left. 'I am delighted, sir, to hear,' he answered gravely, 'that you rendered the story so effective to a person so particularly ignorant of the language.' 'Yes,' rejoined the victim, 'and so particularly ugly, Mr. Liston.' Liston once came to a juvenile party at Planché's dressed in a red jacket, nankeen trousers, and a pinafore, sucking a lollipop. Passing through Leicester Square one day with Miller, the bookseller, he was descanting with great unction upon the dainty dinner of stewed tripe he was going to partake of. 'Beastly stuff,' ejaculated Miller. Liston stopped, and in a stentorian voice cried, 'What! you don't like tripe?' 'No.' 'You don't like tripe?' again roared Liston. People began to look round and stare. 'Hush, for heaven's sake, don't speak so loud,' expostulated Miller. But instead of heeding him, the actor turned to the passers-by and, pointing to the unfortunate bookseller, cried, 'There's a man who doesn't like tripe.' A crowd began to gather and Miller took to his heels, with Liston's cry ringing in his ears, 'There goes the man who doesn't like tripe!'

There was a childlike love of fun about the men of this time, which is as far removed from the dulness of this prigish age, with its *bourgeois* type of respectability, as it was from the fire-eating proclivities of the Middle Ages. Munder never met Planché in the street without getting astride his umbrella and prancing up to him. Meadows, when he cam-

to visit him, would seat himself on the kerb-stone with his hat in his hand like a beggar, and would not move until they threw him out a halfpenny. When Wallack and Tom Cooke met one another in the street, they would remove *each other's* hats, bow gravely and pass on. 'LITTLE' KNIGHT, an admirable actor of rustics and servants, belongs to this period ; he was a London actor from 1809 to 1825. RICHARD JONES, Lewis's successor in the mercurial parts of comedy, made his first bow on a London stage at Covent Garden in 1807. JOHN FAWCETT, a fine character and actor of old man parts, made his first appearance in 1791. OXBERRY, who flourished between 1807 and 1824, was another capital actor of rustic characters. BARTLEY, the last of the Falstaffs, made his first appearance in 1802. WILLIE BLANCHARD, an admirable comedian, in 1800. HARLEY, whom we need not be very old to remember, first delighted a London audience as Lissardo in 1815 ; and WILLIAM FARREN came three years later.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LAST OF THE FAMOUS ACTRESSES.

Miss O'Neill—Her first chance—Her exquisite performance of Juliet—Description of her acting—Her marriage—Mrs. W. West—Miss Somerville—Miss Duncan—Miss Smith—Mrs. Egerton—Sally Booth—Mrs. Gibbs—Maria Foote—Her entanglement with Colonel Berkeley—‘Pea green’ Hayne—Public caprice—Her marriage—Mrs. Mardyn—Madame Vestris—Miss Kelley—Mrs. Glover—Her sad domestic life.

THE line of great *tragic* actresses, which was unbroken from the days of Elizabeth Barry, terminated with Miss O'NEILL. There have been excellent *tragediennes* since, but few, if any, who have risen to those heights where genius towers above talent. Perhaps even Miss O'Neill scarcely merits a place beside Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Crawford, and

Mrs. Siddons—her pedestal, perhaps, should be placed a little lower, but still she was of them—one of that glorious band to which each generation for nearly one hundred and fifty years added one or more, but of which, it would seem, must now be written—all told.\* She was born about the year 1788 or 1789, was the daughter of an Irish strolling manager, and was brought up to the stage from childhood. What strolling life was in England I have endeavoured to picture in a former chapter; it was even a harder lot across the Channel. But while still very young accident rescued her from this life of drudgery and privation. Miss Walstein, the leading lady of the Theatre Royal, Dublin, presuming upon her great popularity, had placed the manager in such a dilemma that it almost necessitated him to close the theatre, when some one suggested Miss O'Neill, who happened to be in the city with her father at the time, as a very clever girl. Glad to snatch at any chance which offered escape, the manager engaged her. As Juliet her success was very marked. She remained at Dublin, an immense favourite both as a lady and an actress, until John Kemble saw her, and offered her an engagement for three years at £15, £16, and £17 a week. Her first appearance at Covent Garden was as Juliet, on October 6th, 1814.

Macready speaks rapturously of her performance. ‘The charming picture she presented,’ he says, ‘was one that time could not fade from my memory. It was not altogether the matchless beauty of form and face, but the spirit of perfect innocence and purity that seemed to glisten in her speaking eyes and breathe from her chiselled lips.’ He highly commends her artless unconsciousness, her freedom from affectation, her fervid *Italian* passion in the balcony-scene. ‘Love was to her life: life not valued if unsustained by love. . . . Throughout my whole experience hers was the only representation of Juliet I have ever seen.’ Her

\* The author must here be understood to be speaking exclusively of the *legitimate* school.

success was almost a repetition of the Siddons' *furore*. ‘Her beauty, grace, simplicity, and tenderness were the theme of every tongue. Crowds were nightly disappointed in finding room in the theatre to witness her enchanting presentations. Juliet, Belvidera, Mrs. Beverley, Mrs. Haller, were again realities upon the scene, attested with enthusiasm by the tears and applauding shouts of admiring thousands.’ ‘In all her acting,’ says a critic of the day, ‘she was a very woman. There was little in it of a meditative cast, little of calm, meditative grandeur, yet every look, movement, gesture, and tone was gracefully feminine; her pathos was most irresistible and sweet. Nothing in their kind could exceed the exquisite propriety and modest loveliness of her Mrs. Haller, the conjugal sweetness of her Belvidera, and the womanly heroism of her Evadne. Her Juliet in the early scenes was perhaps too light and playful. The affection, in this delicious character, is throughout deep, serious, and intense. The passion that is “boundless as the sea” leaves no time for elegant trifling or graceful coquetry. In the latter scenes Miss O’Neill gave full glorious vent to the tide of love and sorrow. Her highest effort, perhaps, was in portraying of a tremulous and giddy joy, a rapture bordering on frenzy, an inspiration of delight, portentous of sudden and fearful disaster. We never remember to have been more delighted by her acting than when we have seen her in Isabella, at the return of Biron, clasp him in wild rapture, forgetting her dreadful condition, gaze on him with eyes lit up with strange fire, and reply to his questions by laughter in which horror and transport mingled. She mistook her powers when she resorted to shrieks, rattlings in the throat, and all the terrors of physical agony. She was worthy to express all the best sympathies and noblest triumphs of her sex. In the delineation of confiding love, of generous rapture, of feminine elevation of soul, she has had no equal within our memory, and can never have a superior.’ It was said that in tenderness and grief she at least equalled Mrs. Siddons in her first

year. But Mrs. Siddons' passion was combined with a lofty imagination and commanding intellect. Miss O'Neill owed everything to extreme sensibility. She gave herself up entirely to the impression of the moment, was borne along by the tide of passion, and absorbed in suffering. It was said, however, that, unlike that of Mrs. Siddons, her acting left no permanent impression upon the mind, that its effect passed away with the momentary illusion of the scene. Hazlitt remarks, 'her acting is pure nature or passion, and is the prose of tragedy ; for the poetry she must lean on the author.' In 1819, when she was a little over thirty years of age, she was married to Mr. Wrixon Beecher, M.P. for Mallow, who afterwards inherited his uncle's baronetcy ; she at once retired into private life. Her family had always been entirely dependent upon her, and at her marriage she settled upon them the sum of £30,000 which she had accumulated during her brief professional career. Lady Morgan, writing of her in 1836, says, 'The poetry of her voice remains ; it is still Juliet's voice in the balcony-scene, but all that was poetical in her beauty has gone. She is now a thin, elegant-looking lady, but with no beauty save the indestructible beauty of goodness.' She died in 1872, at the age of eighty-one.

Miss Cooke, better known as MRS. W. WEST, made her first appearance in London in 1812, and in tender and pathetic parts was considered to be Miss O'Neill's successor, while the more powerful characters of tragedy found a fine exponent in MISS SOMERVILLE, afterwards Mrs. Burn. MISS DUNCAN was excellent in comedy and tragedy. MISS SMITH was a tragedienne of some power. MRS. EGERTON, the original Meg Merrilies and of nearly all Scott's sterner heroines, was a famous melodramatic actress. Chief among the comediettes are the names of SALLY BOOTH and MRS. GIBBS.

But more familiar to the general reader than any of these is the name of MARIA FOOTE. She was born in 1798, her

father, who claimed to be a descendant from Samuel Foote, had been an officer in the army, and was at the time of her birth manager of the Plymouth Theatre ; her mother, many years Mr. Foote's junior, was a woman of considerable personal attractions and accomplishments. Maria played Juliet when she was only twelve years old, and soon afterwards her father gave up theatrical management and took an hotel at Exeter. But the speculation proved a failure. A borrower and a sponger, not over-scrupulous in his transactions, he was not held in much esteem among the Devonshire people. His wife took to the stage, her beauty gathered admirers about her whom she did not very harshly repulse, the husband was indifferent, and the not uncommon result followed. In 1814 Maria was engaged for Covent Garden, being then only sixteen years of age, and made her first appearance as Amanthis, in 'The Child of Nature.' She displayed no very brilliant talent, but a charming face and an elegant figure rendered her attractive in secondary parts. At the end of the season she went 'starring' to Cheltenham. It was there she made the acquaintance of Colonel Berkeley, who had a taste for amateur acting, and who offered his services for her benefit ; as he was certain to draw a crowded house his offer, as a matter of course, was accepted. All who are acquainted with the history of that period know the kind of person Colonel Berkeley was ; to those who are not, it is sufficient to say he was a boon companion of the Prince Regent. Fascinated by her beauty, he seduced the young actress under a promise of marriage. She was scarcely seventeen at the time, a mere child in years, and considering her surroundings, must be held wholly blameless in the affair. A hardened *roué* dangling a coronet before her eyes, a scheming father, an intriguing mother, what could she do but fall into the snare ? She lived under the Colonel's protection for five years, and bore him two children ; then finding he had no intention of fulfilling his promise, she broke off the connection.

In 1824 Mr. Joseph Hayne, of Burderop Park, Wiltshire, a silly young fellow about twenty-one or twenty-two, known in the best and worst society of London as ‘Pea-Green Hayne,’ fancied himself desperately in love with her. Here was another chance for the harpy parents, and doubtless under their advice and control she concealed from her lover, whose intentions were honourable, her unfortunate *liaison*. It was Berkeley himself who, one night in the pit of the opera, took the despicable course of making him acquainted with it, intimating at the same time that their connection still continued. A letter next morning from Hayne informed her of the *éclaircissement*, and that all must be broken off between them. Soon afterwards, however, he renewed the engagement and fixed the day for the marriage. All was prepared ; the morning came, but not the bridegroom, nor even any message from him. In answer to a letter that she wrote demanding an explanation of this conduct, came a reply to the effect that his friends had succeeded in getting him away into the country, and were keeping him there by force. Very soon, however, we find him back in London, and again yielding to the fascinations of the lovely Maria ; for the second time the wedding-day was fixed and the license bought, and this time he took a solemn oath that nothing should separate them. Believing that all was now safe, she gave up her profession and sold her wardrobe. But the poor weak-minded creature, who could neither make up resolution enough to have nor to leave her, again suffered matters to go on to the very day, and again failed to put in an appearance. Some letters passed between the parties, and then followed an action for breach of promise, damages laid at £14,000. The summing up of the judge was just and admirable ; he pointed out that Mr. Hayne had twice renewed his offer of marriage, after being made acquainted with the lady’s antecedents, and that therefore she was entitled to compensation, although not to the same amount as if her character had been untarnished. The

jury returned for £3,000. The trial was the topic of the day; when it was over, Miss Foote resumed her profession and became the rage. It was just about the time of the Cox *versus* Kean affair, and by a strange reversal of the ordinary way of the world, while audiences crowded the theatre nightly to howl and hiss at the man, they came in equal crowds to shower sympathetic applause upon the woman. Throughout the provinces it was the same, the people rushed to see the heroine of the famous trial, so that in some places after the house was filled, bars had to be placed across the entrances to keep back the crush.

As Maria Darlington in 'A Roland for an Oliver,' as The Little Jockey, and several other parts of that kind, she was very charming, and Macready speaks highly of her acting as Virginia; but had she not been the heroine of a *cause célèbre* she would have been lost among a crowd of actresses, the abilities of several of whom were decidedly superior. 'The charm of her beauty,' wrote a critic of the day, 'is heightened by her many accomplishments and graceful demeanour; she sings, plays, and dances, not indeed like a professor, but like a most gifted lady.' There seems to have been a nameless charm and fascination about her, which we have all experienced, but cannot define. In 1831 she was married to the Earl of Harrington. She died in 1867.

Another actress of this period, more celebrated for her beauty than for her talents, was MRS. MARDYN, who, appearing for the first time upon the London stage in 1815, made some sensation as Amelia Wildenheim in 'Lovers' Vows,' and Peggy in the 'Country Girl.' A greater interest is attached to her, however, as being one of the victims of Lady Byron's and her lady's-maid's calumnies. One day, when Lord Byron was a member of the Drury Lane Committee, Mrs. Mardyn was desirous of seeing him about some part that she wished to play, but which was to be given to a rival, and failing to see him at the theatre, she called upon him at his house. While she was there it came on to rain,

and Byron offered her his carriage, which was standing at the door, to convey her to Drury Lane. Upon which Lady Byron's garret-born and kitchen-fed confidant raised such a scandal that a night or two afterwards Mrs. Mardyn was violently hissed the moment she set foot upon the stage. It was afterwards bruited abroad that she was one of the causes of separation between the noble poet and his wife. But that there was not the slightest foundation for scandal is fully proved in the 'Conversations,' in which this subject is touched upon.

There are two actresses whom I cannot forbear taking a passing glance at, although their career extended beyond the limits to which I have confined myself—FANNY KELLEY and MADAME VESTRIS. The former was born in 1790, and made her first appearance at Drury Lane, as the Duke of York in 'Richard the Third,' several nights before Cooke's *début*, in 1800. Old playgoers still remember how exquisitely she played the heroines of those domestic dramas which were written for the little Dean Street Theatre. Miss Kelley is still living. Her sister Lydia made some sensation in 1815 as Juliet to Kean's Romeo. MADAME VESTRIS was born in London in 1797, and was the daughter of Bartolozzi, the engraver. In 1813 she became the wife of Armand Vestris, the last of the famous trio of dancers of that name. He brought her out upon the stage of the King's Theatre as a singer in the same year. After performing in Paris she opened at Drury Lane in 1821. How she afterwards became the rage, and undertook the management, at different times, of the Olympic, Lyceum and Covent Garden Theatres, cannot be related in these pages.

There is yet another name still familiar to old playgoers, although her stage career commenced as early as 1789—I allude to MRS. GLOVER. In 1796, although then only in her sixteenth year, she was a favourite actress at Bath. Her first appearance in London was at Covent Garden, in 1797, as Elwina in 'Percy.' But in tragedy she never rose above mediocrity. As a comedy-actress, Boaden says, she was the

only one who ever, in the slightest degree, resembled Mrs. Abington. The line of business technically called ‘old women’ may be said to have died with her ; she has never had a successor in such characters as Mrs. Candour, Mrs. Heidelberg, and the Widow Green (‘Love Chase’), her acting in which revived the glories of the Garrick period. Her life was not a happy one ; her girlhood was passed under the control of a father who not only lived upon her earnings, but entirely monopolised them. He chose for her a husband, supposed to be a man of property, for whom she had no liking, and who followed in his footsteps ; until at length, discovering that not content with being himself entirely dependent upon her salary, he kept another family out of it, she procured a separation. He afterwards attempted to take her children from her by force, and otherwise persecuted her. A self-sacrificing daughter, an injured wife, an admirable mother, no breath of scandal ever tarnished her name. Such characters are by no means uncommon in her much-abused and misunderstood profession. She died in 1850, and almost upon the stage.

A famous contemporary of Mrs. Glover’s in her own line of business was MRS. DAVENPORT, who was a member of the Covent Garden company from 1794 to 1820.

---

## CHAPTER VII.

### WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.

Intended for the bar—A first lesson in difficulties—Plays with Mrs. Siddons and Mrs. Jordan—An Irish story—An offer from Covent Garden—The story of a London *début*—Personal disadvantages—Bitter disappointments—Rival Richards—Leigh Hunt’s comparison—First introduction to Sheridan Knowles—Virginius—Marriage—A pretty love story—First visit to America—A Parisian success—Werner—Scrimmage with Bunn—Lessee of Covent Garden—Heavy losses—As manager of Drury Lane—Causes of failure—Edwin Forrest—The New York riot—A narrow escape—Farewell performances—Harshness of his character—His death.

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY (born in 1793) was intended for the bar, and commenced his education at Rugby ; but

his father, an actor not unknown to London, and for some time the manager of the Birmingham, Newcastle, and Manchester theatres, having fallen into great difficulties in the latter town, young William was removed from school. The success of Master Betty, and some talent for recitation he had displayed, seem to have inspired the elder Macready with the hope that the boy might be made a second juvenile Roscius, and it was accordingly arranged that he should renounce the wig and gown for the sock and buskin. At sixteen we find him, while his father was in a debtor's prison, managing at Chester a company of refractory actors, whose salaries were in arrears, and conducting the business so skilfully, that by the end of the season he had cleared off all liabilities, and had just sufficient money left to convey himself and three of the principal actors to Newcastle, which was to be the next scene of their labours. Travelling all night through bleak December weather, they arrived about noon, on Christmas Day, at a small town on the borders of Westmoreland, where he tendered his last five-pound note in payment for the chaise. To his dismay, the landlord refused to change it, as he did not like the look of it, and stated at the same time that he could not send them forward in the then state of the roads with fewer than four horses. Here was a terrible fix ; they were to open at Newcastle on the following night, and their non-arrival would be most disastrous. Macready's watch had been left at Chester, and his three companions had now to deposit theirs with the obdurate landlord, for an advance of £3 and change of the note. So delighted were they when they found themselves once more *en voyage* from the dreary town that had threatened to be their prison, that they gave three cheers at parting. That night they slept at Durham, where they were well known, arrived at Newcastle betimes the next morning—and the young manager had learned his 'first lesson in the world's difficulties.'

On June 7th, 1810, the bills of the Birmingham theatre, to which the company had removed at the end of the New-

castle season, announced that the tragedy of 'Romeo and Juliet' would be performed that evening, 'the part of Romeo by a young gentleman, being his first appearance on any stage.' That young gentleman was Macready, and he seems to have acquitted himself, notwithstanding his extreme nervousness, to the entire satisfaction of the audience. Every round of applause acted like an inspiration on him. When, at the end of the play, he was asked how he felt, 'My boyish answer was without disguise, "I feel as if I should like to act it all over again!"' Lothair, in 'Monk' Lewis's 'Adelgitha,' Young Norval, Zanga—on the strength of some juvenile recitations from the part, but which proved, as might have been expected, a very feeble performance—and George Barnwell followed. The father was very sanguine of his success; the youth was not. But he worked with a will, and after acting a character always endeavoured to improve upon it at each repetition. He tells how on Sundays, after morning service, he would lock himself in the theatre, and pace the stage in every direction, to give himself ease, to become familiar in his deportment, with exits and entrances, and with every variety of gesture and attitude. His characters were all acted over and over again, and his speeches recited till, tired out, he was glad to breathe the fresh air again. This was for several years a custom with him. Before he had been two years upon the stage he performed Beverley and Young Norval with Mrs. Siddons, who, in passing from Edinburgh to London to take her farewell of the stage, stopped at Newcastle for two nights. With doubt, anxiety, and trepidation he set to work to study the former part, which he had never played, and, on the day of her arrival, was summoned to her hotel to rehearse her scenes. The great tragedy-queen received him smilingly, and even condescended to jest upon his nervousness. But at night, in his first scene with her, he was so overcome by his fears, that both his presence of mind and his memory forsook him, and he stood bewildered until she

prompted him. Gradually, however, he regained his self-possession, and played so effectively in the last scenes that she applauded him loudly from the side, exclaiming, ‘Bravo, sir, bravo !’ In *Norval* he felt more at home. Upon taking leave, the great actress gave him kind words of advice and encouragement. Soon afterwards he had the honour of playing with the queen of comedy, Mrs. Jordan, and was the Don Felix to her Violante. Mrs. Jordan was as encouraging to him as Mrs. Siddons had been.

About this time he received an offer from Dimond, the great Bath manager, and a quarrel with his father, who was of an overbearing and imperious temper, decided him to accept it. He made his first appearance in the Western city as Romeo, on the 26th of December, 1814. He tells us that he felt quite a flutter at the heart upon seeing his name posted upon the walls, and adds the singular fact that that kind of nervous emotion never left him to the latest moment of his professional career, and that he often crossed over to the other side of the street to avoid passing a bill in which his name was figuring. The Bath theatre was at this time second only to the great London houses, and a young man unknown to the metropolis coming there to star, was regarded by the company as a piece of presumption, so that he was received by them with a supercilious coldness. His reception by the audience, however, was very hearty. ‘The applause,’ he writes, ‘increased in each scene, until in the encounter with Tybalt it swelled into prolonged cheering, and, to use a homely phrase, I found myself firm in the saddle. The end of the tragedy was a triumph, and I returned to my little homely lodging to write off to my family the news of my success.’ In the ‘Gamester’ he produced so profound an impression that several ladies were led out of the boxes in hysterics ; the press was highly favourable to him, with one exception. This critic found his impersonation of Beverley to be altogether excellent, if not perfect, but ‘for the unaccommodating disposition of Nature in the formation of his face.’

His fame reaching London, Harris, of Covent Garden, sent down Fawcett, the stage manager, to see him act. The report was favourable, and soon came an offer of a three-years' engagement at a good salary. But the young tragedian elected to remain another year in the provinces. We next find him fulfilling a short engagement at Dublin at £50 a week. He adds another to the many good stories of the facetiousness of the Dublin audience. One night, while performing Pierre in '*Venice Preserved*', the Jaffier, an actor ponderous in person as well as style, was drowsing out his dying speech, when a voice from the gallery exclaimed, 'Ah, now, die at once,' to which another from the opposite side responded, 'Hould your tongue, you blackguard.' Then in a patronising tone to the Jaffier, 'Take your time, now.' He returned to Bath for the winter at an increased salary, but opened negotiations with Drury Lane; they fell through, however, because the committee were for 'cheap ventures.' Then came a letter from Fawcett: 'Kean seems likely to be more in your way than Young would be at Covent Garden. All your best parts you might act with us and not trespass upon anybody. Come to us next year—for one year, two years, three years, or for life. The article shall be made as you please, only don't be exorbitant.' The terms proposed and accepted would be considered modest enough in the present day—five years' engagement at a salary which was to begin at £16 and end at £18. But he was still uneasy and full of fretful misgivings, and shrank from the great trial before him.

The 16th of September, 1816, was appointed for his opening night at Covent Garden. A first appearance upon the London stage, in those days, was considered a terrible ordeal, and its success or failure frequently decided the actor's future destiny. At the rehearsals, unaccustomed to the vast size of the theatre, he was filled with a feeling almost of dismay. His opening part was to be Orestes in Ambrose Philip's '*Distressed Mother*.' Charles Kemble

was to be Pyrrhus ; Mrs. Egerton, a good melodramatic actress, but nothing more, the Hermione ; and Mrs. Glover, the greatest *comic* actress of the day, but very indifferent in tragedy, the distracted Andromache. All depended upon himself. Describing the event he says : ‘ After an early dinner, I lay down, endeavouring to compose myself till the hour appointed for my setting out to the theatre. The hackney-coach was called, and I can almost fancy in recollecting it that I feel every disquieting jolt of the rumbling vehicle as it slowly performed the office of a hurdle in conveying me to the place of execution. The silent process of dressing was only interrupted by the call-boy Parsloe’s voice, ‘ Overture on, sir !’ which sent a chill to my heart. The official rap at the door soon followed, and the summons, “ Mr. Macready,” made me instantly rally all my energies, and with a firm step I went forward to my trial. But the appearance of resolute composure assumed by the player at this turning-point of his life belies the internal struggles he endures. These eventful trials, in respect to the state of mind and body in which they are encountered, so resemble each other that one described, describes all. The same agitation, and effort to master it, the dazzled vision, the short quick breath, the dry palate, the throbbing of the heart—all, however painfully felt, must be effectually disguised in the character the actor strives to place before his audience. Abbott, as Pylades, was waiting for me at the side-scene, and when the curtain had risen, grasping his hand almost convulsively, I dashed upon the stage, exclaiming, as in a transport of the highest joy, “ Oh, Pylades, what’s life without a friend !” The welcome of applause that greeted my entrance (always so liberally bestowed by a London public on every new performer) was all I could have desired ; but it was not until the loud and long plaudits that followed the vehement burst of passion in the line, ‘ Oh ye gods ! give me Hermione or let me die !’ that I gained any degree of self-possession. As the play proceeded I

became more and more animated, under the conflicting emotions of the distracted lover, and at the close, as I sank, "*furiis agitatus Orestes*," into the arms of Pylades, the prolonged cheers of my auditors satisfied me of my success. The custom of "calling for" the player had not then been introduced into our English theatres; but it was considered a sufficient testimony of a triumphant issue to give out the play for repetition on the Friday and Monday following. Congratulations were profusely tendered me by the various members of the Covent Garden company, who stopped me in passing from the stage to my dressing-room; and when summoned to the manager's room, Mr. Harris, in his peculiar way, observed, "Well, my boy, you have done capitally; and if you could carry a play along with such a cast, I don't know what you cannot do!" I was to dine with him the next day to settle further proceedings, and I returned to my lodgings in a state of mind like one not feeling awake from a disturbing dream, grateful for my escape, yet almost questioning the reality of what had passed.'

Kean was in a private box applauding liberally. But the triumph was only half-assured until the press had pronounced, and it was with feverish impatience he waited for the morning papers. The notices were favourable upon the whole; the *Times*, while allowing him a certain amount of ability, did not consider it sufficient to shake Young or intimidate Charles Kemble. But Hazlitt, in the *Examiner*, the great theatrical authority of the day, pronounced him to be 'by far the best tragic actor that has come out in our remembrance, with the exception of Mr. Kean.' This was high praise, placing him as it did above Young. Other critics were rather severe upon his personal appearance. One evening, while sitting in the boxes, he overheard the following conversation between two people seated in front of him. 'Have you seen the new actor?' 'What, Macready? No, I have not; I am told he is a capital actor, but devilish ugly; they say he is an ugly likeness of Liston!' When Charles Kemble

told his brother John that he believed Macready would take a foremost rank in his profession, the other answered with a shrug, ‘Oh, Charles ! with that face !’ After playing in a forgotten tragedy, called ‘The Italian Lover,’ Harris decided to put him in the bill with Charles Young, to alternate Othello and Iago. Othello was a character he had played but little, and Iago he had not even studied ; neither actor was very successful. Hazlitt said, ‘Young in Othello was like a great humming-top, and Macready in Iago like a mischievous boy whipping him.’ He began to think he had made his venture too soon ; Young was in possession of the leading tragic parts, Charles Kemble of the youthful, chivalrous ones, and he dared not essay those of Kean. ‘Where, then, is the place for me ?’ he asks. ‘The Slave,’ a poor melodrama made successful by a splendid cast, embracing as it did Terry, Liston, Emery, Jones, and that exquisite singer, Miss Stephens, gave him an original part in Gambia. But Kemble and Miss O’Neill were the great attractions, and Booth, whom injudicious rivalry absurdly set up against Kean, was playing Richard. In a new piece entitled ‘The Conquest of Taranto, or St. Clara’s Eve,’ Macready was cast for ‘one of the meanest, most despicable villains that a romancer’s invention ever teemed with.’ He offered to pay the forfeit of thirty pounds rather than appear in it, but the management insisted. The play failed, yet so finely did Macready act in one of the scenes that he overpowered Booth in the heroic character, received the plaudits intended for him, and was pronounced by the *Morning Herald* ‘to have saved the piece.’ It was the last of Booth’s fiascos : he appeared only four times afterwards. This unexpected turn of fortune taught Macready for the future ‘confidence in the ultimate triumph of careful and honest study.’ In Shiel’s ‘Apostate’ he was cast for Pescara, another repulsive part, although one infinitely superior to the last, and even beside Young, Charles Kemble, and Miss O’Neill secured for himself a great success. Tieck in his ‘Letters on the English

Drama,' remarking on this performance, says: 'This villain was admirably represented, and was indeed so vehement, truthful and powerful a personation, that for the first time since my arrival in England I felt myself recalled to the best days of German acting.' However much he might have pleased the critical portion of the audience, Macready was not a draw, and that is the point of view from which the manager must always regard his leading actors.

His first part in the second season was in a melodramatic after-piece. So bitterly mortified was he with this treatment, that he had serious thoughts of abandoning the stage, studying for an Oxford degree, and entering the Church; and probably he would have carried out these intentions, had not his brother, who was an officer in the army, required help at his hands just then, obliging him to borrow a sum of money which could only be repaid by his professional earnings. He gained a triumph, although not in the high poetic sphere to which he aspired, in the dramatic version of Scott's 'Rob Roy'; and a second in another of Shiel's tragedies, 'Balamira, or the Fall of Tunis,' in which, although he was cast the inevitable heavy part, it was considered the most effective in the play, and the *Herald* pronounced 'that he had made a giant stride in his profession.' As Posthumus and Glenalvon he was also highly successful, and by the end of the season felt that his position had in every way improved. As a proof, Elliston paid him £100 for a week's performance at Birmingham.

During the opening weeks of the Covent Garden season of 1819-20 the fortunes of the house were at a low ebb. Young and Miss O'Neill had seceded; Miss Stephens and Liston were away, and before long a quarrel between Harris and Charles Kemble caused the retirement of the latter; salaries were not paid, and the manager told Shiel that he did not know in the morning when he arose whether he should not shoot himself before the night. As a desperate resort he proposed to put up Macready in Richard. To

enter the arena against Kean in one of his greatest characters was a hazardous experiment, and it was with a 'sickening sinking at the heart' our actor saw his name announced for the part. The announcement caused great excitement, and the house was crowded. He was accorded a very hearty reception, and the play went well, but without any strong demonstration until the scene with Tyrrel, in the fourth act. 'With all the eagerness of fevered impatience I rushed to him, inquiring of him, in short broken sentences, the children's fate; with rapid decision on the mode of disposing of them, hastily gave him his order, and, hurrying him away, exclaimed with triumphant exultation, "Why, then, my loudest fears are hushed." The pit rose to a man, and continued waving hats and handkerchiefs, in a perfect tempest of applause for some minutes. The battle was won. The excitement of the audience was maintained at a fever-heat throughout the remainder of the tragedy. The tent scene closed with acclamations that drowned the concluding couplet, and at the death scene the pit rose again and cheered vociferously.' Worthy of note is the following passage: 'The practice was this evening first introduced at Covent Garden of calling on the principal actor. In obedience to the impatient and persevering summons of the house, I was desired by Fawcett to go before the curtain; and accordingly I announced the tragedy for repetition amidst congratulating shouts.' The press was enthusiastic about the new Richard; the houses were well filled on each night of repetition, the treasury was re-opened on the following Saturday, and the performers paid him the compliment of admitting that to him they were indebted for their salaries. Soon Elliston, at the other house, brought Kean into the field in the same part, and for a time the town-talk was the merits of the rival Richards, ballads were sung about the streets, and the windows of the print-shops were filled with pictures and caricatures. Leigh Hunt's contrast between the two actors is very fine: 'Compared

with Mr. Kean, we should say that a division of merits, usual enough with the performance of such comprehensive characters as Shakespeare's, has taken place in the Richards of these two actors. Mr. Kean's Richard is the more sombre, perhaps the deeper part of him—Mr. Macready's the livelier and more animal part, a very considerable one nevertheless. Mr. Kean's is the more gloomy and reflective villain, rendered so by the united effects of his deformity and subtle-mindedness ; Mr. Macready's is the more ardent and bold-faced one, borne up by a temperament naturally high and sanguine, though pulled down by mortification. The one has more of the seriousness of conscious evil in it, the other of the gaiety of meditated success. Mr. Kean's has gone deeper even than the relief of his conscience—he has found melancholy at the bottom of that necessity for relief ; Mr. Macready's is more sustained in his troubled waters by constitutional vigour and buoyancy. In short, Mr. Kean's Richard is more like King Richard darkened by the shadow of his approaching success, and announcing by the depth of his desperation when it shall be disputed ; Mr. Macready's Richard is more like the Duke of Gloucester, brother to the gay tyrant Edward IV., and partaking as much of his character as the contradiction of the family handsomeness in his person would allow. If these two features in the character of Richard could be united by an actor, the performance would be a perfect one.'

In Coriolanus he scored another success, and while Kemble's splendid performance was still fresh in the memory of playgoers. He was offered £50 a night to play at Brighton, and old Mr. Harris, the proprietor of Covent Garden, came up to town purposely to thank him for the service he had rendered the theatre in its distress. It was less, however, as a Shakespearian actor than as the creator of a series of original poetic characters, chiefly from the pen of Sheridan Knowles, that Macready achieved his ultimate fame, and upon which his posthumous reputation must rest.

His first introduction to Knowles, and to that writer's masterpiece, is best told in his own words : ' In the course of the month of April, an application was made to me by my old Glasgow friend John Tait, on the subject of a tragedy that had been produced at Glasgow with much applause. The author he described as a man of original genius, and one in whose fortunes he and many of his fellow-citizens took a deep interest. It so happened that I had undergone the reading of two or three tragedies when late at Glasgow, and it was with consequent distrust that, to oblige a very good friend, I undertook to read this. Tait was to send the MS. without delay, and I looked forward to my task with no very goodwill. It was about three o'clock one day that I was preparing to go out when a parcel arrived from Tait, and the MS. of " *Virginius*. " After some hesitation, I thought it best to get the business over, to do at once what I had engaged to do, and I sat down determinedly to my work. The freshness and simplicity of the dialogue fixed my attention ; I read on and on, and was soon absorbed in the interest of the story and the passion of the scenes, till at its close I found myself in such a state of excitement that for a time I was undecided what step to take. Impulse was in the ascendant, and snatching up my pen, I hurriedly wrote, as my agitated feelings prompted, a letter to the author, to me then a perfect stranger.' After a moment's reflection, however, considering it might be deemed extravagant, he tore it up, and after dinner re-read the MS. in a more collected mood. His first impressions were confirmed, and he wrote to Knowles his opinion of the work, assuring him that he would do his best to procure its acceptance and the highest payment. The next morning he again read through the piece with Proctor, who was equally delighted with it. The terms arranged by Harris were £ 400 for twenty nights, and £ 100 more for its performance the next season. But not one six-pence was spent in the getting-up, and, to be correct in costume, Macready was obliged to purchase his own dresses.

Fawcett delegated to him the stage management. Charles Kemble was the Icilius ; Terry, Dentatus ; Abbott, Appius Claudius ; Miss Foote, Virginia. Macready's every thought was engrossed in ' *Virginius*' , and from the first hour in the morning to the last hour of the night his mind was filled with its images, and every vacant hour was employed in rehearsing its pathetic touches, and its whirlwinds of passion. ' On the 17th of May, 1820,' he continues, ' " *Virginius*" was first acted, and its early scenes were not unattended with danger, Charles Kemble being so hoarse that not one word spoken in the lowest whisper could be heard ; but the action of the scene told its story with sufficient distinctness to keep alive its interest. This grew as the play advanced, and in the third act, in Icilius's great scene, Kemble's voice came out in all its natural strength, and brought down thunders of applause. With the progress of the play, the rapt attention of the audience gradually kindled into enthusiasm. Long-continued cheers followed the close of each succeeding act ; half-stifled screams and involuntary ejaculations burst forth when the fatal blow was struck to the daughter's heart ; and the curtain fell amidst the deafening applause of a highly-excited auditory.'

Virginia continued to be one if not *the* greatest of all Macready's impersonations, a performance to be classed with Garrick's Richard, Kean's Othello, John Kemble's Coriolanus. The *Morning Herald* said the next morning : ' The delineation of this arduous character by Mr. Macready will take its place among the first performances on the stage ; it is one of the finest specimens of art which his great and growing genius has yet produced. Austere, tender, familiar, elevated, mingling at once terror and pathos, he ran over the scale of dramatic expression with the highest degree of what may be called power.'

In the following season he made a great success in a Shakespearian character, in which neither Garrick nor John Kemble had been able to produce much effect, ' Henry the

Fourth,' in the Second Part of the play of that name. One of Macready's finest and best-known portraits, painted by Jackson, was taken in that part. The play had been revived to introduce a gorgeous coronation procession, in imitation of the pageant that had just been performed at Westminster; it was finely cast. Farren was Shallow ; Emery, Silence ; Blanchard, Pistol ; Charles Kemble, the Prince ; Fawcett, Falstaff. The revival filled Covent Garden for many nights, extending the season far beyond its usual limits.

In 1821 he entered into an agreement with Harris for another five years at £20 a week, that being at the time the highest salary paid in the theatre to any performer. Young was re-engaged the same season, and shared the principal parts with him. Both distinguished themselves in a fine revival of 'Julius Cæsar,' particularly Macready, whose Cassius was a masterly impersonation. A disagreement among the holders of the patent led to Harris's secession from the management of Covent Garden, for the rental of which his partner undertook to pay him the enormous sum of £12,500. The new managers proved utterly incompetent, lost some of their best actors, among them Macready himself, all of whom went over to the opposite house and left the bunglers to the fate they merited—bankruptcy. Elliston, ever keen and energetic, offered him £20 a night for forty nights, an offer with which he immediately closed. The interval between the London seasons had been mostly passed in starring through the country, where he was immensely successful. Caius Gracchus was his great success during this engagement, but the refusal of Kean to appear in the same play with him prevented its renewal, while the hostility of a certain portion of the press, headed by *John Bull*, rendered it far from satisfactory.

His marriage, celebrated on June 24, 1824, at old St. Pancras Church, is the next important event to be recorded in his life. While starring at Glasgow in 1815, a pretty little girl about nine years of age was sent to play a

child's part with him in a drama called 'The Hunter of the Alps,' she had not been allowed sufficient time for study, and was imperfect in the words, for which he severely scolded her. Five years afterwards he met her again at Aberdeen, where she was his Virginia on the opening night. 'She might,' he says, 'have been Virginia herself. The beauty of her face was more in its expression than in feature, though no want of loveliness was there. Her rehearsals greatly pleased me, her acting being so much in earnest. There was a native grace in her deportment and every movement, and never were innocence and sensibility more sweetly personified than in her mild look and speaking eyes streaming with tears.' He learned that, young as she was, she was the support of her family. During an engagement of three weeks, he had many opportunities of conversing with her, and his first favourable impression continued to increase. He took great pains with her professionally, and on the last night presented her with the handsomest shawl he could procure in Perth. At parting, he desired her to claim his influence and aid in any way, should she require it, and to rely upon always finding a ready friend in him. The following year he recommended her to his father, who was now lessee of the Bristol theatre. There, during a starring engagement, he met her again and again; then followed a correspondence, 'which I tried to make instrumental to the advancement of her education, and then it was, in my own case as no doubt in hers, that "love approached me under friendship's name," although unsuspected and unconfessed by either of us.' The death of her father, while she was acting at Dublin, at length brought about the long-deferred explanation, and he could no longer conceal from himself that love was the inspiration of all the counsel and assistance he had rendered her: he proposed and was accepted. 'It is,' he adds, 'but simple justice to her beloved memory to repeat the truth that, although in a worldly sense I might have formed a more advantageous connection, I could not have met with qualities

to compare with the fond affection, the liveliness, and simple worth that gave happiness to so many years of my life.'

William Tell was his last great original part, previous to his departure for America. He made his first appearance at the Park Theatre, New York, on October 2, 1826, and was enthusiastically received by a crowded house. At Boston the boxes were let by auction, at premiums exceeding \$200. But his progress was only a repetition of that of Kean and Cooke, already given in these pages. A far more hazardous engagement was that at the Salle Favart, Paris. The French critics, however, were very warm in their eulogies, comparing him with Le Kain and Talma. No English actor was ever before or since so successful in Paris. About the time of his return from America, he took a house, Elm Place, at Elstree, on the borders of Middlesex and Hertfordshire, three miles beyond Edgeware, where he resided many years. The addition of Werner to his original parts, another grand creation, is the only event that need be recorded previous to his notorious fracas with Bunn at Drury Lane, in the season of 1836.

Mr. Bunn was not altogether the right man in the right place, as the manager of a great London theatre, and he and Macready were constantly at variance. There were doubtless faults upon both sides; the actor's was a discontented, irascible temper, which despised the shortcomings of his chief, and the chief took every occasion in a petty way to annoy the actor. One night Bunn made him play the *first* three acts of Richard—all the finer scenes are in the last two. Boiling with rage, as he came off the stage at the end of the play, he rushed into the manager's room, and exclaiming, 'You d——d scoundrel! How dare you use me in this manner?' struck him in the face. There was a tussle upon a sofa, which lasted until the combatants were separated. Of course Macready appeared no more in the theatre. The newspapers were full of it—'Great fight, B—nn and M—y,' was placarded upon the walls, and a suit for damages

instituted.\* ‘No one can more severely condemn my precipitation than myself,’ he says in his Diary. ‘No enemy can censure me more harshly, no friend lament more deeply my forgetfulness of all I ought to have thought upon.’ It was a subject of self-reproach to him for many a day afterwards.

On July 24, 1837, he entered upon the lesseeship of Covent Garden, gathered about him all the available talent of the day, and opened on the 30th of September with ‘The Winter’s Tale.’ But the season was unremunerative from the first, and as early as the 19th of October, we find him proposing to restore the salary he had received from the treasury, and signing two days afterwards a cheque for £300 to meet the week’s deficiencies. He produced ‘The Bridal,’ an alteration of ‘The Maid’s Tragedy;’ ‘The Lady of Lyons;’ a splendid revival of ‘King Lear,’ and ‘Coriolanus;’ but when the house closed he had sustained a very heavy pecuniary loss. Nevertheless he undertook a second season. From September 24, 1838, to January 1, 1839, the loss was £950. The pantomime, however, reimbursed him with profit. Then came ‘Richelieu,’ of which he was very doubtful up to the time of rehearsal, and the glorious revivals of ‘Henry the Fifth’ and ‘The Tempest.’ The latter ran fifty-five nights, the receipts averaging over £230 nightly. The two following seasons he was at the Haymarket playing ‘The Sea Captain’ and ‘Money;’ the latter was an immense success.

At the end of 1841 he undertook the management of Drury Lane, which he opened with an elaborate get-up of the ‘Merchant of Venice.’ He carried it on a second season, with such a repertory of old and new plays as have never since been seen, unless we except the Phelps management at Sadler’s Wells. But the result was not profitable. This was not so much from the failure of public support as on account of the enormous expenses, of which the rental

\* Damages were assessed £150.

and the conditions under which the theatre was let were the most exorbitant and oppressive. The free, or silver tickets of the shareholders were a cruel burden upon full nights, rendering a number of the best seats unremunerative ; added to which every dress and scene found by the lessee became the property of the theatre evermore. In these facts are contained the secret of more than half a century of failures at the National theatres. Macready, under these circumstances, was compelled to relinquish the management of Drury Lane, and pay a second visit to America to recoup his losses. On his return to England, in 1845, he re-visited Paris, where he played Hamlet before the Court at the Tuileries, and was presented with a magnificent poniard by Louis Philippe.

A third engagement in the United States was rendered memorable by a specimen of Yankee rowdyism such as Kean had experienced a few years before, common enough in the America ridiculed by Dickens, but which, it is to be hoped, has disappeared in the present generation. Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian, while playing at the Princess's Theatre during a recent visit to England, had been hissed, and chose to attribute this mark of disapprobation to Macready's influence. The accusation, however, was totally without foundation ; indeed, one of the New York papers when reviewing the riot I am about to describe, boldly stated that the insult he received was of American origin, ‘the product of the spleen and envy of one of his own countrymen.’ Mr. Forrest returned the compliment by publicly hissing Macready one night at Edinburgh. When Macready arrived at Philadelphia, a ruffianly combination, either under or not under the auspices of Mr. Forrest, was made against him. He performed Macbeth almost in dumb show, amidst occasional showers of nuts and rotten eggs ; but he played through the part, and at the end addressed the audience, pledging his sacred word of honour that he had never shown any hostility to ‘an American actor.’ This

called forth a public letter from Forrest, in which he confessed and gloried in having hissed the English actor, but denied having assisted in any systematic organisation against him, adding, with an insolent ruffianism which proclaimed him to be more than capable of all he denied, that his advice had been to let ‘the superannuated driveller alone.’ On his return visit to New York, Macready opened on May 7th, 1849, as Macbeth. He was greeted with what seemed to him at first a very extraordinary enthusiasm, but which he by-and-by began to perceive was only a counter-demonstration to the howls and shrieks of another part of the audience. ‘They would not let me speak,’ he says, ‘they hung out placards—“You have been proved a liar,” etc.; flung a rotten egg close to me. I pointed it to the audience, and smiled with contempt, persisting in my endeavour to be heard. I could not have been less than a quarter of an hour on the stage altogether, with perfect *sang froid* and good-humour, reposing in the consciousness of my own truth. At last there was nothing for it, and I said “Go on,” and the play proceeded in dumb-show, I hurrying the players on. Copper cents were thrown, some struck me, four or five eggs, a great many apples, nearly if not quite a peck of potatoes, lemons, pieces of wood, a bottle of assafoetida, which splashed my own dress, smelling of course most horribly.’ He bore these brutalities manfully through the first two acts, but at the opening of the third they began to throw chairs, upon which he retired, undressed, and refused to go on again.

The whole affair was a clique, and I have been told by Mr. John Ryder, who was travelling with Macready at the time, that he was offered a large bribe to come forward, and swear falsely that Macready had conspired to render Forrest a failure in England. I need not add the offer was indignantly refused. All the better class opinion of New York was with the injured man; but, alas! rowdyism was then, as now, omnipotent. Emboldened by the sympathy he received, he

appeared again on the 10th of May. The clique soon made themselves heard, but the management was prepared for it, and at a given signal the police ‘closed in upon the scoundrels, occupying the middle seats, who were furiously vociferating and gesticulating, and seemed to lift them or bundle them in a body out of the centre of the house, amid the cheers of the audience. As well as I can remember, the bombardment outside now began. Stones were hurled against the windows in Eighth Street, smashing many ; the work of destruction then became more systematic ; the volleys of stones flew without intermission, battering and smashing all before them ; the gallery and upper gallery still kept up the din within, aided by the crashing of glass and boarding without. The second act passed, the noise and violence without increasing, the contest within becoming feebler.’ A timid friend advised him to bring the performance to a close, but he would not listen to the suggestion. During the fourth act stones were hurled through the windows, and struck the chandelier : the audience hurried from their seats, and huddled against the walls. Into the fifth act, he says, he threw his whole soul, ‘exciting the audience to sympathy even with the glowing words of fiction, whilst those dreadful deeds of real crime and outrage were roaring at intervals in our ears, and rising to madness all around us.’ The death scene was loudly cheered, and he was called before the curtain amidst loud acclamations. While he was dressing, people came into his room full of consternation. The military were called out—were drawn up in the Bowery—the mob were getting stronger. ‘Suddenly we heard a volley of musketry. “Hark, what’s that?” I asked. “The soldiers have fired ! My God !” I exclaimed. Another volley and another. . . . News came that several were killed ; I was really insensible to the degree of danger in which I stood, and saw at once—there being no avoidance—there was nothing for it but to meet the worst with dignity, and so I

stood prepared.' His friends urged the necessity of disguise, and he changed clothes with one of the performers, went down into the orchestra, got over into the parquet, and mixed with the stream of the audience who were leaving the theatre. Threading the excited crowd without, he was conducted to the house of a friend, where he was to sleep. But soon came another friend to report that several men had been killed, and he must get away out of the city at once ; a carriage was ordered to be at the door at four o'clock in the morning to take a doctor to some gentleman's house near New Rochelle. During the night such comforting scraps of intelligence were brought in as—a crowd was seen pursuing an omnibus, which the pursuers protested contained Macready. 'They've killed twenty of us, and, by G—, we'll kill him !' was their cry. 'As the clock struck four, we were on the move. All was still in the dawn of morning, but we waited some ten minutes—an age of suspense—the carriage arrived. I shook the hand of my preserver and friend, my heart responded to the prayer of "God bless him !" and stepping into the carriage—a covered phaeton—we turned up the Fifth Avenue, and were on our way to safety.' In the following month of September, ten of the Astor Place rioters were tried at the Court of General Sessions, New York, and after a fifteen days' trial, all were convicted. The sentences varied from one month's imprisonment to one year's, with a fine of \$250. Such was the end of the most serious and disgraceful riot in stage annals.

Upon his return to England, he began a series of farewell performances through the country. On the 26th of February, 1851, he took his farewell benefit in 'Macbeth.' On that day he began his Diary with these words : 'My first thought as I awoke was that this day was to be the close of my professional life. I meditated on it, and not one feeling of regret mingled with the placid satisfaction accompanying my performance of every act, needfully preparative to the coming

event, as I said to myself, “I shall never have to do this again.”’ Here is a contradiction to Dr. Johnson’s aphorism, that we never do anything consciously for the last time without regret. The confession strikes us disagreeably, after reading only on the previous page this entry: ‘I have attained the loftiest position in the art to which my destiny directed me, have gained the respect of the honoured and respected, and the friendship of the highly gifted, amiable and distinguished.’ Add to this a handsome fortune, and all gained by the profession he leaves without a sigh. How different to the affectionate lingerings of Garrick and others. It is one of the least amiable traits of Macready’s character that he seldom mentions the stage unless it is contemptuously; he is for ever thinking only of the ignorant and bigoted who look down upon the actor, instead of the intellectual and warm-hearted who hold him in honour. In the midst of his triumph he exclaims, ‘It is an unhappy life!’ And even from that point of vantage he can look back upon the struggles of his youth and moan, ‘It was a very unhappy, unprofitable time!’ It is with him always ‘my unhappy profession, my degraded profession!’ Yet in one place he has the grace to say, ‘How often have I envied in others, less fortunate than myself in public favour, this passionate devotion to the stage! To me its drawbacks are ever present.’ He is jealous of all success that can affect him. It depresses his spirits to hear of Mr. Phelps’s success under his own management, although he knows he shall reap the profit of it. He is full of regrets—he regrets what he has lost, what he has spent, and what he has given away. No man was ever so intolerant of the shortcomings of his brother actors; he was as intolerant of the deficiencies of some poor strolling company in, say, Berwick-on-Tweed or Dumfries, the largest salary among which would not exceed a pound, as he would have been to those of an actor at Drury Lane, and he expected them to be as perfect in their

parts and to play up to him with as much skill as Charles Kemble or Abbott, or any London principals ; the smallest fault was reproved with a savagery that rendered his name such a terror wherever he went, that actors have been known to throw up their engagements rather than act with him, and fear and nervousness often created the very shortcomings that so enraged him. At rehearsal the performers were ranged with the precision of chess-men, the very board, nay, the very nail, upon which each was to stand, was marked out, and woe betide the one who deviated a foot from the spot indicated. That he keenly regretted such outbursts of temper after they were past, is shown by many entries in his diary. ‘I feel,’ he says in one place, ‘the folly, the madness, the provoking extravagance of my behaviour, treating men like slaves, and assuming a power over them which is most unjustifiable and most dangerous, and yet contrition and stinging reflection seem to have no power in the punishment they inflict or of producing amendment.’ Much of this was owing to his own indefatigable industry ; probably no man ever studied his profession so intensely ; all his great characters were read and pondered over each time he acted them unto the very last, and he never played any part, however admirably, that he did not on each repetition seek to better it. But Macready never loved art for art’s sake, never really felt that the man ennobled his calling and not the calling the man ; therefore he cannot be ranked among such true artistes as Garrick and Siddons, to whom the stage was all in all—their fortune and their glory. As a Shakespearian actor, Macready can scarcely take a place among the greatest of his predecessors. It was rather in such characters as Virginius, as Tell, Werner, Ion, Richelieu, characters with an admixture of the melodramatic element in them, that he was pre-eminent. In his domestic relations, to judge by the deep affection with which he ever speaks in his diary of his wife and children, he was an admirable man. With all his

devotion to the study of his art he always found time for the cultivation of his mind, and he had a critical knowledge and fine appreciation of both ancient and modern literature.

He survived his retirement twenty-two years, taking up his residence at Cheltenham, and dying in 1873. Like so many other men of genius in various walks of life, he lies buried in Kensal Green.

With the retirement of Macready the history of the legitimate drama closes, at least in connection with the great theatres, and for this the repeal of the Patent Act has been chiefly answerable. Mr. Phelps carried its glories northwards, and for several years that admirable actor, by means of an excellent company and a liberal expenditure, contrived to draw audiences to a purely intellectual entertainment.

It is a disgrace to this country that neither the State nor any body of men interested in literature and art, and with wealth enough to give form to their aspirations, can be induced to found a National Theatre, or a School for Acting, wherein public taste might be educated, artistic training be obtained, and encouragement given to a higher class of dramatic composition. By means of such an institution we might hope to see revived the glories of

### OUR OLD ACTORS.

THE END.







**Date Due**

May 12 1951

MAY 14 '50

MAY 10 '82

sun 3 '64

24191

927  
B17

PELLETIER LIBRARY, ALLEGHENY COLLEGE  
927 B17 AVLL  
Baker, Henry Barton/Our old actors



3 3768 00111 4019

